

# **C. LOUIS LEIPOLDT AND THE MAKING OF A SOUTH AFRICAN MODERNISM**

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## **Declaration**

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## Abstract

C. Louis Leipoldt had, in his lifetime and after his death, a celebrated reputation as an important Afrikaans poet in South Africa. He remains most remembered for his contribution to the growth of Afrikaans literature and for the significance of his poetry in helping to establish Afrikaans literature in the early part of the twentieth century in South Africa. He is also mostly remembered for his recipe books and food and wine guides, as well as his career as a paediatrician.

Between 1980 and 2001, scholarly work was done to offer a reappraisal of Leipoldt's literary works. During this period, previously unpublished material written by Leipoldt was made publicly available. Three novels by Leipoldt, written in English, were published at irregular intervals between 1980 and 2001. The novels cast Leipoldt in a different light, suggesting that as an English-language writer he was against many of the ideas he was associated with when viewed as an Afrikaans-language writer. These ideas, for the most part, linked Leipoldt to the Afrikaner nationalist project of the twentieth century and co-opted him to Afrikaner nationalist policies of racial segregation based on the campaigning for group identity.

The three English-language novels, collectively making up the *Valley* trilogy, not only reveal Leipoldt's opposition to the nationalist project but also draw attention to some of his other work in Afrikaans, in which this same ideological opposition may be noted. In this thesis I argue that Leipoldt's *Valley* trilogy, as well as some of his other, Afrikaans works, not only refute the nationalist project but offer a reading of South African modernity in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This reading of historical events in South Africa that reveals the trajectory of the country's modernity is strongly indicative of a unique literary modernism. It is my argument that Leipoldt's *Valley* trilogy shows a modernist critique of the historical events it presents. Because the concept of a South African modernism in literature has not yet been fully defined, it is also an aim of this thesis to propose that Leipoldt's works contribute a broad but sustained literary outlook that covers his own lifespan (1880-1947) as well as the historical period he examines in the *Valley* trilogy (the late 1830s -the late 1920s/early 1930s). This literary outlook, I argue, is a modernist outlook, but also a transplantation of a Western understanding of what modernism is to the South African context in which there are crucial differences.

This thesis hopes to arrive at an outcome that binds Leipoldt's anti-nationalism to his literary critique of the modernity he explores in the *Valley* trilogy, thereby proving that Leipoldt could be read as a South African literary modernist.

## Opsomming

C. Louis Leipoldt het in sy leeftyd en na sy dood 'n gevierde reputasie behou as 'n belangrike Afrikaanse digter in Suid-Afrika. Hy word die meeste onthou vir sy bydrae tot die groei van die Afrikaanse letterkunde en die belangrikeheid van sy poësie tot die Afrikaanse letterkunde, se stigting in die vroeë deel van die twintigste eeu in Suid-Afrika. Hy word meestal ook onthou vir sy resepteboeke en kos en wyn gidse, sowel as vir sy loopbaan as 'n pediater.

Tussen 1980 en 2001, is navorsingswerk gedoen om 'n herwaardering van Leipoldt se literêre werk aan te bied. Gedurende hierdie tydperk was voorheen ongepubliseerde materiaal geskryf deur Leipoldt publiek sigbaar gestel. Drie romans deur Leipoldt, wat in Engels geskryf is, is gepubliseer op ongereelde tussenposes tussen 1980 en 2001. Die romans stel Leipoldt in 'n ander lig, wat daarop dui dat as 'n Engelse skrywer was hy gekant teen baie van die idees waarmee hy geassosieer was toe hy as 'n Afrikaanstalige skrywer beskou was. Hierdie idees het grootendeels vir Leipoldt gekoppel aan die Afrikaner-nasionalistiese projek van die twintigste eeu en het hom gekoöpteer tot Afrikaner nasionalistiese beleide van rasse-segregasie gegrond op die veldtog vir groeidentiteit.

Die drie Engelstalige romans, gesamentlik die *Valley*-trilogie, openbaar nie net Leipoldt se teenkating van die nasionalistiese projek nie, maar vestig ook aandag op sommige van sy ander werk in Afrikaans waarin hierdie selfde ideologiese opposisie aangeteken kan word. In hierdie tesis voer ek aan dat Leipoldt se *Valley*-trilogie, sowel as sommige van sy ander, Afrikaans werke, nie net die nasionalistiese projek weerlê nie, maar ook 'n lesing aanbied van Suid-Afrikaanse moderniteit in die negentiende en twintigste ees. Hierdie lesing van historiese gebeure in Suid-Afrika wat die trajek van die land se moderniteit openbaar is sterk aanduidend van 'n unieke literêre modernisme. Dit is my redenering dat Leipoldt se *Valley*-trilogie 'n modernistiese kritiek toon van die historiese gebeurtenisse wat dit aanbied. Omdat die konsep van 'n Suid-Afrikaanse modernisme in die letterkunde nog nie ten volle gedefinieer is nie, is dit ook 'n doel van hierdie tesis om voor te stel dat Leipoldt se werke 'n breë maar volgehoue literêre kritiek bydra wat sy eie leeftyd dek (1880-1947) asook die historiese tydperk wat hy ondersoek in die *Valley*-trilogie (die laat 1830s tot die laat 1920s/vroeë 1930s). Hierdie literêre vooruitsig, redeneer ek, is 'n modernistiese vooruitsig, maar ook 'n oorplanting van 'n Westerse begrip van wat die modernisme is tot die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks waarin daar belangrike verskille is.

Hierdie tesis hoop tot 'n uitkoms wat Leipoldt se anti-nasionalisme bind tot aan sy literêre kritiek van die moderniteit wat hy ondersoek in die *Valley*-trilogie, en daardeur bewys dat Leipoldt gelees kan word word as 'n Suid-Afrikaanse literêre modernis

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### *The Problem of History and Heritage*

C. Louis Leipoldt is primarily remembered as a pioneer of Afrikaans poetry. His literary legacy mostly rests on the great reputation of his 1911 debut collection of poetry, *Oom Gert Vertel en Ander Gedigte* (Uncle Gert's Story and Other Poems, my translation)<sup>1</sup>. An early success for the then-bourgeoning Afrikaans literature, Leipoldt's collection almost immediately linked him in a pantheon of writers who not only established Afrikaans as a standardised national language in the early twentieth century but also contributed to the idea of the Afrikaner Volk as a distinct nation within South Africa.

The recent publication of Leipoldt's *Valley* trilogy, three novels written in English in the 1930s (but not published in his day) provides opportunities for studying the many facets of Leipoldt's literary career. The Leipoldt that emerges in the *Valley* trilogy is anti-nationalist and quite different to the figure of the sympathetic nationalist writer Leipoldt may still be remembered as. The novels that make up the *Valley* trilogy are *Gallows Gecko*, *Stormwrack* and *The Mask*, each with a core argument for liberalism and social equality between different classes and races in South Africa. The Leipoldt behind the *Valley* trilogy is more of a classic cosmopolitan liberal<sup>2</sup> than a pioneer of the Afrikaans language and member of the white South African nationalist establishment.

Though written in the 1930s, the 'lost' status of the trilogy and its complete emergence in the twenty-first century allows for original critical analysis to be done, with few appraisals or studies of the trilogy as yet compared to the available criticisms of Leipoldt's published work. Leipoldt's biographers and interested literary historians may have shown genuine interest in the trilogy but have stopped short of producing in-depth work on it. The broad scope and compelling arguments that characterise the trilogy merit attention today for their

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<sup>1</sup> From this point on, all translations of Afrikaans or Dutch titles and quotes appearing in the thesis are my own.

<sup>2</sup> It must be noted that, although the thesis returns regularly to this idea of Leipoldt as a cosmopolitan, the description applies more directly to Leipoldt as a Cape liberal. This means that, in the context of Cape liberal beliefs (which are explored in the thesis), Leipoldt cuts the figure of a cosmopolitan but not necessarily outside of that. For instance, available research on his interactions with black South Africans is limited and undermines a more general understanding of cosmopolitanism even though Leipoldt's literary arguments were fundamentally opposed to racism and segregation in South Africa.

controversial points and intent. Leipoldt based his literary work, in Afrikaans and English, on the idea of nation building towards a progressive South Africa, a theme he examines in the *Valley* trilogy. Today, with exciting ventures into South African historiography yielding much literary content, Leipoldt's novels of ideas deserve scope.

This thesis focuses on the trilogy of novels as the primary study material, along with other writings by Leipoldt that are closely associated with it. The method of analysis will be a close reading of the novels, taking into account their literary structure and narrative technique, and the moral universe that is represented in these texts.

The thesis seeks to locate the work of C. Louis Leipoldt as a South African modernist writer who straddles linguistic and cultural boundaries. As such, the thesis will potentially provide a reconfiguration of the cultural landscape of early twentieth century South Africa. Apart from the intricacy of constructing the idea of a specific South African modernism, a problem lies also in justifying the centrality of Leipoldt within a 'modernist' South African literary history that spans English and Afrikaans literary traditions. The thesis intends to arrive at an understanding of South African modernism that begins to cross these literary boundaries.

Through reference to Leipoldt's work and interest, some motifs that mark this modernist conformation will be explored, including ornamentalism, architecture, and a particularly South African emphasis on natural scenery. It is here that the problem of heritage becomes ubiquitous. Essentially, Leipoldt's trilogy explores a common heritage between English and Afrikaans speaking white South Africans in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and argues that both sections displayed unique, separatist approaches to claiming heritage, with the aim of establishing cultural territory. The thesis explores Leipoldt's usage of both divergent and conjoint heritage concerns through his literary commentary on English and Afrikaans heritages in South Africa. He engages with questions of colonisation through British, but also Western European interpretations of the colonial project at the Cape. An attendant topic here is the English vernacular project designed to promote both a sentiment that had as its roots a 'return' to an older, more rural England before the Industrial Revolution, where the emphasis was on feudal and agrarian orders. This approach was decisively anti-modern but turned on the modern apparatus of British national feeling, which was undeniably augured by colonialism. Challengingly, as David Johnson (2012: 2) shows, the European conceptions of nationhood applied to colonial territories is disjunctive because

the “exporting” (2012: 2) of European culture outside of the West rested on erroneous assumptions of smooth facilitation and implementation (or transplanting) of cultural practices, and on European perceptions of its own superiority and ability to transform a world beyond its borders to Eurocentric terms. Consequently, this kind of cultural movement from the West to the “non-West” created an hyperbolised idea of Europe itself. Chakrabarty (2000:4) mentions that until the twentieth century, Europe had assumed that its own history counted as ‘a universal human history’. He also describes that this assumption was motivated by the fact of Europe’s colonial territories, which further led to a uniquely European claim to modernity and the idea of a ‘European age’ (2000: 4). The claim to modernity is better understood as being open and not necessarily limited to a universalised European construct or monopoly (Hassan, 2010: 454). However, Europe’s influence on the modernity of other countries seems embedded, either through colonialism or the impression of Europe’s so-called ‘universal history’:

...The phenomenon of ‘political modernity’-namely, the rule by modern institutions of the state, bureaucracy, and capitalist enterprise-is impossible to think of anywhere in the world without invoking certain categories and concepts, the genealogies of which go deep into the intellectual and even theological traditions of Europe. (Chakrabarty, 2000: 4).

The spectre of Europe that fell over South Africa typically enacted, in its crudest form, a process of arrival, take-over, displacement and indoctrination. The cultural development of South Africa after the arrival of Dutch settlers in the seventeenth century is shown in Leipoldt’s thinking to have started slowly through the establishment of the Church, and advanced through the arrival of British settlers at the Cape toward the end of the eighteenth century, at the time of the European Enlightenment, followed by the arrival of mostly Scottish Presbyterian missionaries from Europe bringing various systems of education with them (Leipoldt, 1936: 847). A history of South Africa was already being written according to a Western template:

Insofar as the academic discourse of history is concerned, ‘Europe’ remains the sovereign, theoretical subject of all histories, including the ones we call ‘Indian’, ‘Chinese’, ‘Kenyan’ and so on. There is a peculiar way in which all these other histories tend to become

variants on a master narrative that could be called ‘the history of Europe’”. In this sense, the standard ideas of modernity privilege modernity as the West but simultaneously are also posited as universal. As a result, Timothy Mitchell suggests, “the non-West must play the role of the outside, the otherness that creates the boundary of the space of modernity.

(Chakrabarty, 2000: 27, Mitchell, 2000: 1-34)

Mitchell’s idea of the “non-West”’s otherness to the West designating a geographical boundary of modernity implies the idea of resistance to Western modernity that is difficult to identify in many former colonies. In its otherness, the cultural distance between the West and “non-West” could be read as a simulacrum of international modernity. The colonised countries both fed Western modernity through adding to its colonial industry but also had little room to manoeuvre their own growth. The stories of colonised countries were jeopardised by colonialism, which pulled these countries into the ‘universal European history’.

Benedict Anderson (1983) put forward the idea that colonial communities could be “imagined” in vast Western concepts of nationhood based on the advent of print culture as a tool for consolidating and repeating “blueprints” (Johnson, 2012: 2) that factor in the fostering of independent colonial states. Through a process of repetition, namely copying revolutionary models that worked elsewhere, modernity and nationalism could be seen to have started operating hand in hand by the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but the idea that modernity, and by extension nationalism, succeeds on simple repetition is flawed. It does not take into account the idea of difference in indigenous cultures (Chatterjee, 1993, in Johnson, 2012: 2) that resists being directed in both its colonial and anti-colonial impulses by the West. Mitchell argues that,

Modernity, like capitalism, is defined by its claim to universality, to uniqueness... Yet this always remains an impossible unity, an incomplete universal. Each staging of the modern must be arranged to produce the unified, global history of modernity, yet each requires those forms of difference that introduce the possibility of a discrepancy... Modernity then becomes the unsuitable yet unavoidable name for all these discrepant histories. (Mitchell, 2000: 15-16)

The emergence of Afrikaners, however, suggested that an imagined nationhood was deliberately fostered. This was complicated by the existence of competing traditions, Afrikaner and English, and the largely ignored traditions of slaves and indigenous inhabitants of South Africa. The original twentieth century ambition was to nurture the dual heritages of English and Afrikaner alongside one another with the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910 to celebrate the unified English-Afrikaner white South Africa, essentially a union of elitist, racist and superior-minded thinking that excluded the larger indigenous population of the country (Merrington, 2006: 683, 689). The common heritage of two frankly ill-at-ease bed partners lay both in racial exclusivity and folkloric visions of vernacular preservations and pageantry. To the Afrikaners, events of the nineteenth century Great Trek would be fanatically celebrated and re-enacted in the twentieth century and would culminate in a centenary festival that, quite literally, showcased a new class of people, the Afrikaners, as being besotted with an Old World, Biblical and rural lifestyle. The emergence of the Afrikaners as a 'new' class of people is seen to be a consequence of the Great Trek, cited as the starting point of modern Afrikaner history (Merrington, 2003: 36). Roland Barthes (1967: 9) locates prominent cultural signs of Western modernity during the mid-nineteenth century in Europe. He identifies it with the pluralisation of world-views deriving from the evolution of new classes, which I mention because Barthes' description does seem similar to the evolution of the Afrikaner class in terms of the time-period only.

The English heritage model also had its origins in the nineteenth century:

At the root of the heritage concept is the idea of family, of legacy or bequest, genealogy, and lineage. It is argued that this set of metaphors, drawn from legal or social custom or practice, became bonded with nineteenth century concepts of both gender and race, resulting in a powerful discourse about the nation as family, about sister states and brother races, motherlands and fatherlands, and ultimately, in the British sphere, the Commonwealth 'family' of nations, driven, at the time, by visions of an imperial world order... this obsession was nurtured by political theory, spiritual discourse, the influences of social-evolutionary speculation, eugenics and scientific racism, and the emergence of heightened nostalgic national self-invention even as the

western nations grappled with modernism and modernisation.  
(Merrington, 2006: 686)

The shared sense of nostalgia in English and Afrikaner thinking in the early twentieth century is noted and perhaps even parodied by Leipoldt's trilogy of novels, which informs the conviction of this thesis that, of the many possible reasons the trilogy merits our attention, it is most strongly a document, a modernist document, of the moral waywardness induced by competing and conflicting impulses to heritage, nationhood and modernity housed in the same state, a kind of semi-schizophrenia that is equally unique and devastating. In this thesis, I read the trilogy as a tract on these issues in the South African context. I draw on recent historical sources which re-think nineteenth and twentieth century South African history and I make use of thoughts on culture and history in decoding the primary narrative. The decoding includes reading the literature as both against and from the history it discusses and drawing on examples of how literary modernism in South Africa could be approached. There is a strong reliance on historical material and theories of culture that explore how literature and history come together.

### ***The Valley trilogy: Synopsis***

Each of the novels in the trilogy represents a different period in South African history in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The action of the first novel, *Gallows Gecko*, commences during the late 1830s and ends during the early 1850s. The events in *Stormwrack*, the second novel, begin in 1895 and end in 1901. *The Mask*, the third novel, makes no explicit chronological references but its content and social allusions mark its period as the mid-to-late 1920s.

*Gallows Gecko* tells the story of Amadeus Tereg, a one-time executioner, who decides to change his name and identity and settle himself and his family in a remote district outside Cape Town, known familiarly as the Valley.

Under the name Everardus Nolte he becomes part of the Valley community, assimilating himself into a cosmopolitan mix of peoples: Dutch/Afrikaners, English settlers, German missionaries at a nearby mission station and a descendant of the French Huguenots. During the following decade, he establishes himself as an able farmer, is ordained as an elder in the

Dutch Reformed Church, builds a school and gradually aspires to become the Valley's political representative in parliament.

A very popular figure who does much to win the trust of the Valley community, he is burdened by his past identity as a hangman and is desperate to keep it a secret, fearing exclusion and expulsion from the Valley. After falling dangerously ill to a bout of enteric fever, Nolte, in delirium, exposes his secret but is not excluded by the Valley community – instead, the community forgives his secret and elects him as their parliamentary representative for the Cape Legislative Assembly in 1852. The novel ends with the marriage of Nolte's close friend and descendant of the French Huguenots, Pierre Mabuis, to the Valley's well known woman farm owner and respected widow, Cornelia Priem. Nolte begins his term as the Valley's representative in parliament.

In *Stormwrack*, the protagonist is the native-born Englishman Andrew Quakerley, son of the aristocratic Charles Quakerley of the previous novel, and owner of a magnificent garden that is the Village showpiece. The action of the novel is set in the Village, at the heart of the Valley district, and the story focuses on second and third generation characters who have their ancestral roots in characters described in *Gallows Gecko*. The Village community displays a peaceful co-existence of Dutch/Afrikaner and English peoples, both supporting the Afrikaner Bond Party of the 1890s, at the time endorsed by Cecil John Rhodes. The events of the Jameson Raid of late 1895, as well as Rhodes' connection to it, sour relations between the two white sections of the Village and tension arises.

The outbreak of the South African War/Anglo Boer War in 1899 sees Andrew Quakerley's loyalties divided between his English and Afrikaner ties, and the situation is worsened when Boer commandos penetrate the District, prompting the arrival of armed English forces to the Village. Martial law is declared in the Village, whereby any person rebelling against the colonial government is sentenced to death by public execution. Quakerley becomes personally involved when his Afrikaner godson goes missing and is accused of rebellion. On the night his godson steals into his home, pleading his innocence and asking for help, a military action is fought outside Quakerley's house, ruining his garden. Shortly afterwards, Quakerley suffers a stroke and, after the dismissal of charges against his godson, he dies.



*The Mask* is the only novel in the trilogy to be set in the twentieth century, during a time of polarisation and secularisation. Elias Vantloo is a retired attorney who has great wealth and enormous power over the Village; he swears by the National Party and its lobbying for Afrikaner group identity. His wife Maria is frail and sickly, and seemingly in awe of her husband as is their daughter, Santa, newly returned from the UK where she qualified as a doctor and who has aims of establishing a practice in the Village. There is tension between Elias, Maria and the head servant of their household, Aya Minah, whose daughter is dying of consumption in the nearby location for “non-white” people.

Santa, who idolises her father and like him is a staunch believer in the National Party and zealously opposed to English culture, steadily discovers a secret Elias has been hiding for years: that he is the father of Aya Minah’s daughter, unbeknown to Maria. After Santa and other relatives confront Elias with the truth, he counters their threats with the fact that they would not reveal his secret to Maria, who dotes on him too much and who is considered too frail to receive such shocking news. Maria, however, reveals that she has known his secret all along, and forces him to leave the Village with her after she reveals her knowledge.

### ***Writings about Leipoldt and the publication history of the Valley trilogy***

Scholarly studies and peer appraisals of Leipoldt’s literary output have been produced since the 1940s; these are mostly in Afrikaans. In 1948, after his death, numerous Afrikaans poets contributed to a *feestschrift* in memory of Leipoldt (Merrington, 2003: 32), collated by P.J. Nienaber and titled *Eensamige Veelsydige* (Lonesome Versatility). In 1949 the collection, *The Ballad of Dick King and Other Poems* was posthumously published. In 1953, Leipoldt’s friend and sometime fellow-journalist<sup>3</sup> M.H. Viljoen published his memoirs, *’n Joernalis Vertel* (A Journalist Reveals), in which a large section is devoted to personal accounts of Leipoldt’s character. In 1954, J. Kromhout wrote *Leipoldt as Digter* (Leipoldt as Poet), in which Leipoldt’s poetry collections are critically discussed for their impact on Afrikaans literature as well as their deeper engagements with social and historical issues in South Africa. It is perhaps the first full-length study of Leipoldt’s poetry that researches questions of Leipoldt’s anti-nationalism<sup>4</sup> and disputes critical perceptions, forged within the Afrikaans

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<sup>3</sup> Viljoen regularly acted as editor for Leipoldt’s pieces in *Die Huisgenoot*; see Viljoen (1953), p. 151-161

<sup>4</sup> See also Kannemeyer (1999), p. 665



literary canon, that Leipoldt was a poet primarily concerned with the Afrikaner *volk* (folk)<sup>5</sup>. Kromhout's book offered an Afrikaans-language prompt to re-reading Leipoldt as a worldly, complex and broadly humanitarian writer that countered the popular and critical understanding of Leipoldt as nationalist-minded and concerned with an exclusively Afrikaner audience.

In 1960, M.P.O. Burgers' *C. Louis Leipoldt - 'n studie in stofkeuse,-verwerking en ontwikkeling* (C. Louis Leipoldt - a study in sources, processing and development) provided a detailed, erudite examination of the sources for many of Leipoldt's fictional works, and this included his Afrikaans short prose, poems, plays as well as selected English short stories and, possibly, the first scholarly mention of the *Valley* trilogy (Burgers, 1960: 146-149)<sup>6</sup>. While focussing primarily on the inspirations for Leipoldt's fiction and how Leipoldt regularly worked these source materials into his writing<sup>7</sup>, Burgers' book also draws attention to Leipoldt's versatility as a writer and his breadth of interests, as well as the multifarious nature of Leipoldt as an author, playwright and poet.

Leipoldt's Afrikaans poetry, prose and plays were also the subjects of master's and doctoral dissertations in Afrikaans literary studies, as can be seen by the Stellenbosch University<sup>8</sup> library collection which comprises titles like *Leipoldt as Dramaturg* (Leipoldt as Playwright), a 1935 master's dissertation by W.H. Venter at the University of Pretoria; *Die mens, Leipoldt (soos ons hom uit sy eerste twee digbundels leer ken)* (The person, Leipoldt, as we have come to know him through his first two collections of poetry), a 1950 master's dissertation by D. J. Malan; *Twee dramatiese monoloë : 'n bydrae tot die studie van die verskuns by Leipoldt en Van Wyk Louw* (Two dramatic monologues: a contribution to the study of versification in Leipoldt and Van Wyk Louw), a 1958 doctoral dissertation by H. W. Truter; *'n Studie van sekere aspekte van die woordgebruik van C.L. Leipoldt, soos waargeneem uit sy prosawerke* (A study of certain aspects of the vocabulary of C. L. Leipoldt, as observed in his prose works), a master's dissertation by J.C. Bam in 1962 and *'n Studie van C. Louis Leipoldt se*

<sup>5</sup> In the foreword to Leipoldt's debut collection of poetry, *Oom Gert Vertel en Ander Gedigte*, his friend J.J. Smith, a prominent Afrikaans academic, put forth the idea of Leipoldt as a folk poet; see Leipoldt (1926)

<sup>6</sup> Burgers mostly discusses *Gallows Gecko* as a re-interpretation of Leipoldt's Afrikaans novel, *Galgsalmander* (1932) and *The Mask* as the novelisation of Leipoldt's Afrikaans play, *Afgode* (1931).

<sup>7</sup> Burgers is mostly concerned, in this book, with the story-teller's psychological motivations for fictionalising actual events.

<sup>8</sup> Stellenbosch University has, until recently, been a mostly Afrikaans-language institution.

*Slampamperliedjies* (A study of C. Louis Leipoldt's *Slampamperliedjies*)<sup>9</sup>, a 1969 master's dissertation by L. Strydom. Most of these dissertations confirm Leipoldt's importance to the Afrikaans literary canon but research into them will show that their discussions seldom touch on Leipoldt's anti-nationalism, his criticism of Afrikaans as a literary language<sup>10</sup>, nor do they make any mention of his English work. The *Valley* trilogy is not mentioned in any of these dissertations.

By the mid-to-late 1960s, Leipoldt's works appeared in critical surveys of Afrikaans literature such as G. Dekker's *Afrikaanse Literatuurgeskiedenis* (1966) (Afrikaans Literary History) but it was his inclusion in the surveys and appraisals of Afrikaans literature by the scholar J. C. Kannemeyer in the 1970s that saw a continuance of Kromhout's re-casting of Leipoldt as more of a cosmopolitan than a nationalist literary figure. In studies like *Opstelle oor die Afrikaanse drama* (Essays about the Afrikaans drama) (1970), *Die Afrikaanse bewegings* (1974) (The Afrikaans movements), *Konfrontasies : letterkundige opstelle en kritiek, 1961-1975* (1977) (Confrontations: literary essays and criticism) and, later, *Geskiedenis van die Afrikaanse literatuur* (1984) (History of Afrikaans literature) and *Die Afrikaanse literatuur, 1652-1987* (1988) (Afrikaans literature), Kannemeyer established himself as among the foremost researchers of Afrikaans literature, and in these works he regularly included Leipoldt in his surveys. Kannemeyer was particularly opposed to some of Dekker's readings of Leipoldt in *Afrikaanse Literatuurgeskiedenis*, which he felt were erroneous and misleading in perpetuating the perception that Leipoldt was a nationalist writer. Kannemeyer discusses this in his 1999 biography of Leipoldt<sup>11</sup>.

1980 marked the centenary of Leipoldt's birth, celebrated in the Leipoldt festival<sup>12</sup> and throughout that year there were publications of his work. Kannemeyer edited a book of Leipoldt's collected poems<sup>13</sup>, the first time all his Afrikaans and English poems appeared in one edition (Gray, 2000b: 8). Nienaber edited *Leipoldt in Beeld en Woord* (Leipoldt in Image and Words), an updated version of Nienaber's 1948 book on Leipoldt; various writers contributed essays to *Leipoldt 100: 'n Bundel Opstelle* (Leipoldt 100: A Collection of

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<sup>9</sup> 'Slampamper' is a made-up word, thought to have been coined by Leipoldt's mother; see Leipoldt (1999), p.12

<sup>10</sup> This will be discussed at length throughout the thesis.

<sup>11</sup> See Kannemeyer (1999), pp. 134, 382 and 665

<sup>12</sup> This has become an annual literary event hosted in Clanwilliam, Leipoldt's home town.

<sup>13</sup> See Leipoldt (1980c)

Essays); Leipoldt's play *Moederplig* (Mother's Duty) was posthumously published and performed<sup>14</sup>; C. J. Mieny's *Leipoldt in Londen : Die Vormingsjare* (Leipoldt in London: The Formative Years) was a biographical exploration of Leipoldt's time as a medical student in London from 1902 to 1910 and paid more attention to his medical career than to his literary work; *Eet Saam met Leipoldt* (Dine with Leipoldt) was dedicated to Leipoldt's writing on culinary matters and featured many of his recipes; a collection of essays that contributed to the Leipoldt festival was also published, as was a selection of short stories, *O'Callaghan se Waatlemoen en Ander Verhale* (O' Callaghan's Watermelon and Other Stories) some of which had never been published before. Throughout 1980 there were many other publications along the lines of critical commentary on Leipoldt's work or newer editions of existing work<sup>15</sup>; there was also a documentary film about Leipoldt, *Slampamperman*, directed by Katienka Heyns<sup>16</sup>.

Of particular importance to this thesis is the 1980 publication of *Stormwrack* through the efforts of Stephen Gray. Leipoldt's English writing was not neglected in the years before the 1980 boom: in 1974 his *300 years of Cape Wine* was posthumously published, followed by *Cape Cookery* in 1976, which featured Leipoldt's writing about food and his recipes. In 1979, Leipoldt's letters to his benefactor during his time as a medical student in London were collected in *Dear Dr. Bolus: letters from Clanwilliam, London, New York & Europe written mainly during his medical education by C. Louis Leipoldt to Harry Bolus in Cape Town from 1897 to 1911*. However, after Burgers' book in 1960, it seems there was no further mention, in print, of the *Valley* trilogy<sup>17</sup>. In the foreword to both the 1980 and 2000 editions of *Stormwrack*, Gray documents the publication history of the novel. Gray's account is one that suggests a serendipitous discovery of two different typescripts of the *Valley* trilogy (Gray, 2000b: 5-9), one located in the manuscript section of the Africana Collection of the National Library of South Africa in Cape Town, and the other at the Special Holdings of the Jagger Library at the University of Cape Town (UCT) collection to which Leipoldt bequeathed large portions of his work (2000b: 8). At the mid-to-late 1970s point that Gray unexpectedly discovered the typescripts, they had most likely been boxed and unread for possibly over two decades (2000b: 5) at the National Library, while there may have been more recent readers of

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<sup>14</sup> See Kannemeyer (1999), p. 558

<sup>15</sup> See Kannemeyer, (1999), p. 663

<sup>16</sup> Ibid

<sup>17</sup> My own research, as well as the findings of Gray motivate this point.

the work at the UCT Jagger library (2000b: 8). Never having previously considered Leipoldt as an English-language writer of note in South African literature (2000b: 6), Gray became absorbed in the trilogy and did substantial work in editing and abridging *Stormwrack* and he succeeded in publishing it in 1980. This was the first public appearance of any part of the *Valley* trilogy in print. Gray had converted a sprawling, confusing and unedited manuscript into a readable and successful novel in time for the Leipoldt centenary, and reviewers like Michael Rice<sup>18</sup> immediately recognised the implication of Gray's achievement in having an English-language work by a writer hailed as an Afrikaans pioneer published. Gray himself seemed excited by the prospect of new readings of Leipoldt emerging and began including mentions of Leipoldt in his own work: 1979's survey *South African Literature*, an article comparing Leipoldt and Herman Charles Bosman<sup>19</sup> and a piece called *The novelist as archivist*<sup>20</sup>, focused mainly on the *Valley* trilogy. Gray's version of *Stormwrack* would be nominated as one of the top twenty South African works of all time in a 1994 *Mail and Guardian* poll (2000b: 16). Gray applied a similar editing process to *Gallows Gecko*, abridging it and releasing it in 2000 with a new title, *Chameleon on the Gallows*, for reasons he explains in his foreword.

Other prominent works devoted to Leipoldt include the Kannemeyer-edited *Literêre Causerie*, a selection of thirteen newspaper pieces written in Afrikaans by Leipoldt from the 1920s to the 1940s, of value to any reader interested in Leipoldt's journalism. Kannemeyer would go on to prove himself perhaps the most dedicated researcher of Leipoldt's career when he wrote the first major biography on Leipoldt in 1999<sup>21</sup> and he coupled that with an omnibus of selected Leipoldt works<sup>22</sup>, including poems, short stories, plays, food writing, correspondences and critical writings in Afrikaans, Dutch and English.

Apart from Kannemeyer and Gray, others have also produced important work on Leipoldt. In 1996, Louise Viljoen wrote an article describing Leipoldt as an Orientalist<sup>23</sup>, based on his

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<sup>18</sup> See Rice (1980)

<sup>19</sup> Gray goes to some length to draw a comparative study between the two writers, which is useful to scholars wishing to compare Leipoldt with other writers vaguely similar to him; see Gray (1980b), p. 1-44

<sup>20</sup> Gray (1984), p.1-10

<sup>21</sup> See Merrington (2003), p. 33

<sup>22</sup> See Leipoldt (1999), *Uit die Skatkis van die Slampamperman* (From The Treasure Chest of the Slampamperman)

<sup>23</sup> See Viljoen, L. (1996)

writings about the Far East in a travel book published in 1932, *Uit My Oosterse Dagboek*. (From My Eastern Diary). In 1999, Hein Viljoen offered an analysis of Leipoldt's famous poem, *Oom Gert Vertel*, (Uncle Gert's Story) a century after the start of the South African War. In 2010, Viljoen once again explored the poem in an article titled *What Oom Gert Does Not Tell: Silences and Resonances of Leipoldt's "Oom Gert Vertel"*<sup>24</sup>. In 2002, Wium Van Zyl selected and edited twelve letters Leipoldt wrote to a Dutch newspaper from May 1900 to October 1901 in his capacity as war correspondent in the Cape Colony during the South African War. The collection is titled *Hierdie Land Van Leuens* (This Land of Lies).

Germane to this thesis, the single necessary event in the twenty-first century was the publication of the *Valley* trilogy as a compendium in 2001 by T.S. Emslie, P.L. Murray and A.J. Russell. This was the first time the third novel in the trilogy, *The Mask*, was published, and the editors, for reasons they explain in the introduction to the compendium (Leipoldt, 2001: xv), chose to preserve Leipoldt's original typescripts and keep them largely intact, thereby running counter to the methods employed by Gray in his versions of *Stormwrack* and *Gallows Gecko*. The team of Emslie, Murray and Russell went on to publish another compendium, *Leipoldt's Cape Cookery*, in 2003, devoted to collecting the majority of Leipoldt's published work on food and wine. The editing team translated an existing Afrikaans book Leipoldt wrote, *Polfyntjies vir die Proe* (Polfyntjies for Tasting) into English and combined it with the posthumous *Cape Cookery* and *300 Years of Cape Wine* to complete the "food trilogy". In 2006, T.S. Emslie and P. L. Murray also brought out an independent edition of *The Mask*, once again largely faithful to Leipoldt's original.

In the wake of the publication of the *Valley* trilogy as one book in 2001, the first scholarly response came in Peter Merrington's 2003 article, *C. Louis Leipoldt's 'Valley Trilogy' and Contested South African Nationalisms in the Early Twentieth Century*<sup>25</sup>. To date, this is among the only published academic works dealing exclusively with the *Valley* trilogy, followed by my own M.A. dissertation, *The Valley Trilogy: A Reading of C. Louis Leipoldt's English-Language Fiction circa 1925—1935* in 2007<sup>26</sup>. Newer projects on the *Valley* trilogy are expected by other writers in late 2012 and 2013. The trilogy also appeared as part of the basic course material for a postgraduate seminar series in English and Cultural Studies, taught

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<sup>24</sup> Viljoen essentially revised and re-negotiated his 1999 argument in this article; see Viljoen, H. (2010)

<sup>25</sup> See Merrington (2003)

<sup>26</sup> See Oppelt (2007); this M.A. thesis includes some initial ideas which I explore deeply in this thesis.

at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) in 2004, and called “South African Modernisms”.

### ***Biographical sketch of C. Louis Leipoldt***

One of the aims of this thesis is to illustrate how C. Louis Leipoldt’s writing as well as his life story suggests a possible study of South African modernism. His lifespan covers the period from 1880 to 1947, and his writing, as examined in this thesis, covers the period from 1896 to 1945. This is an extraordinary period of writing activity. In 1896, he emerged as a boisterous teenager challenging readers of the *Cape Argus* on the topic of racial equality. Between 1899 and 1902, Leipoldt was a fiery young journalist writing about the South African War for both local and international newspapers. Between 1902 and 1910, he wrote from the UK and Europe: letters to his benefactor Dr Bolus and literary essays, as well as a few short stories and sketches. The letters trace his movements as a young man studying medicine in London, and then later travelling Europe, while the short sketches point to concerns that would permeate his most important works in later years. From 1911 to 1920 he emerged as a serious pioneer of Afrikaans literature with the publication of his first collection of poetry<sup>27</sup>, but he also contributed a book about healthy eating<sup>28</sup> as an outcome of his medical studies. In this period he was co-opted to write Afrikaans for local magazines and newspapers, from short stories for children to folk anecdotes to literary reviews and he also published a book dedicated to health matters. This period culminated in his second collection of poetry in 1920<sup>29</sup> that was much less enthusiastically received than its predecessor but also marked the start of a more overt challenge to ingrained ideas of him as an Afrikaner nationalist writer<sup>30</sup>.

His writing in the 1920s started to become exceptionally varied but, at the same time, united through the theme of cosmopolitanism and through his didactic delivery. In the period from 1920 to 1930, he contributed column pieces for a newspaper, discussing topics as diverse as cooking and developments in European literature, and he also contributed more book reviews and critical reflections on the state of South African literature. His interest in psychology seemed inspired by the impact of Freud in the West and he discussed matters of psychology

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<sup>27</sup> *Oom Gert Vertel* (1911)

<sup>28</sup> *Common-sense dietics* (1911)

<sup>29</sup> *Dingaansdag*

<sup>30</sup> See Kromhout (1954), p. 66-73



in his both his newspaper pieces and in his prose<sup>31</sup>. A third collection of Afrikaans poetry<sup>32</sup> was also published in this period, emphasising his hold on cosmopolitanism through its exploring the world of the East while at the same time providing poems about South Africa. His challenge to Afrikaner nationalism is also evident in this collection but was more carefully placed within some of the poems. The later part of this decade saw collections of his short stories being published, as well as scientific pieces for the *South African Medical Journal*. His literary criticism became more involved and concerned about the condition of South African literature, especially focusing on cultural incongruences as a problem between, firstly, different white sections and then white South Africans and “non-white”<sup>33</sup> South Africans. His first attempt at an Afrikaans novel emerged in this period<sup>34</sup>, and also his first play, which became the first professionally produced Afrikaans play<sup>35</sup>, setting dramaturgical standards still admirable today. In this period he also committed to writing an essay<sup>36</sup> on South African culture for the *Cambridge History of the British Empire* series, and he ended the decade writing two more plays – one of them would be another major success<sup>37</sup> while the other one was largely ignored<sup>38</sup>, yet formed the basis, along with his first Afrikaans novel, of what would be his most important English-language work, the *Valley* trilogy. The 1920s alone saw Leipoldt busier than other, more notable (in retrospect) “modernists” like Plomer and Campbell, both of whom wrote in English. His writing in this decade foregrounds his motivations and his literary outlook – in other words, a collection of ingredients for a modernist reading of both Leipoldt and his work starts coming together in this decade. His different vocations as journalist, paediatrician, part-time politician, novelist, poet and playwright also suggest a fragmentary identity dedicated mostly to art. His personal life is intriguing too. He adopted a boy and ran a house dedicated to taking in young boys in need of educative foster care. The house was also where he hosted dinner parties and treated his guests to eccentric but adventurous culinary exploits, and he also played bridge regularly with many literary, political or medical luminaries.

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<sup>31</sup> See *Literêre Causerie* (1990)

<sup>32</sup> *Uit Drie Wêrelddele* (1923)

<sup>33</sup> Throughout the thesis I use this term instead of ‘black’ or ‘coloured’ to denote the exclusion imposed on South Africans who were not white pre-1994

<sup>34</sup> *Galgsalmander* (1932)

<sup>35</sup> *Die Heks* (1923)

<sup>36</sup> See Gray (2000b), p.10

<sup>37</sup> *Die Laaste Aand* (1929)

<sup>38</sup> *Afgode* (1931)

In the early 1930s, Leipoldt made strides as a novelist. At a time when the Afrikaans novel largely concerned itself with the story of farmers seeking work in the cities, he published an Afrikaans psychological thriller<sup>39</sup> and a detective novel<sup>40</sup> equally devoted to psychology and ratiocination, clearly indebted to Edgar Allen Poe and Arthur Conan Doyle. His first Afrikaans novel, which initially emerged in serialised form, was published. A travel book was published<sup>41</sup>, once again highlighting his fascination with the Orient. Another collection of short stories<sup>42</sup>, a fourth collection of poetry<sup>43</sup> that was well received and a cook book<sup>44</sup> published in this time underscore Leipoldt's flexibility. Concurrent with his writing of the essay for Cambridge, Leipoldt's great interest in South African history drove him to complete the writing of the entire *Valley* trilogy by 1932<sup>45</sup>. This is his most sustained project in English, aimed at an international readership, but he failed to find a publisher for it and without fuss returned to Afrikaans writing. More plays were published, and another novel<sup>46</sup>, as well as an epic poem<sup>47</sup>; his journalistic output continued and also his writing in his capacity as a food and wine connoisseur. He contributed more volumes of stories for children and, by the mid-1930s, was engaged in writing Afrikaans historical works on Jan van Riebeeck, the French Huguenots and the Voortrekkers, all of which were published during the late 1930s. Another Afrikaans novel was published in this time, followed by his third detective fiction novel. His essay for Cambridge was also published in 1936. He ended the decade with a published personal memoir<sup>48</sup>, written in English. His scientific writing for the *South African Medical Journal* also continued in this period.

Leipoldt's own life is largely connected to the historical events he discusses in the trilogy: his grandfather was a missionary at the time of the Great Trek, and he was a first-hand witness to the South African War as a journalist and correspondent, while he flirted with a career in politics in the 1920s. He cuts the figure of a writer interrogating history even as he partakes in it, and this is evident through the impossible prescience characters in the first two novels of

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<sup>39</sup> *Die Donker Huis* (1932)

<sup>40</sup> *Die Moord op Muisenberg* (1931)

<sup>41</sup> *Uit My Oosterse Dagboek* (1932)

<sup>42</sup> *Die Rooi Rotte* (1932)

<sup>43</sup> *Schoonheidstroos* (1932)

<sup>44</sup> *Polfyntjies vir die Proe* (1933)

<sup>45</sup> See Leipoldt (2000), pp. 10-11

<sup>46</sup> *Die Dwergvroutjie* (1937)

<sup>47</sup> *Die Bergtragedie* (1932)

<sup>48</sup> *Bushveld Doctor* (1937, 1980)



the trilogy display when they speculate about the future. He figures himself in the fabric of the fiction, locating himself as a teenage character in *Stormwrack*<sup>49</sup> and re-imagines his younger self as a woman in *The Mask*, setting her against a character that embodies his older self.

The trilogy is defined by its tension between a less-than-ideal present and a romantic imagining of the past that intentionally shows itself up. In that, it speaks to certain texts, like Joseph Conrad and Ford Maddox Ford's collaborative novel *The Inheritors* (1901)<sup>50</sup> that could be regarded as 'early' modern novels, as well as D. H. Lawrence's *The Rainbow* (1915), which traces a rural farming community's generational ceding to a life increasingly industrialised. These novels negotiate the path from Victorian literature through realism to the onset of the novels that would increasingly be remembered in hindsight as modernist texts. Leipoldt's writing style is not far different: it evinces a mix between romantic writing and more complicated attempts at realism as well as psychological character views that effectively challenge the previous two points in an awkward, contradictory manner that is regularly ascribed to modernism.

In this thesis, I aim to describe Leipoldt's modernism as located not in the twentieth century urban revolt against modernity but in an earlier concern with the nineteenth century. Born towards the end of the nineteenth century, Leipoldt's writing hinted at an almost Proustian desire to return to the days of his childhood, a time he was drawn to in his work through the liberal and progressive values he was raised with as the son of a German missionary. In both his fiction and his critical prose, Leipoldt expounds a particular kind of nineteenth century sensibility in the 'advice' he recommends in changing the course of South Africa's twentieth century. This sensibility is evident in the first two novels of the *Valley* trilogy and in *Stormwrack*: characters possessing this nineteenth century way of thinking about cultural development are shown to be aware that it was not going to continue into the new century. The notion of being overwhelmed by an important event, or series of events that inspire a modernist response, is alluded to throughout this thesis and, again, Leipoldt's life story also provides an example of this when the discussion turns to his writing of 1900 to 1902.

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<sup>49</sup> See Leipoldt (2001), pp. xvi and 239

<sup>50</sup> This novel, part science-fiction, underscores a break from tradition and nineteenth century values in its depiction of "new" societies. Modern generations, driven by a need for social and economic power, signify a shift in social life that leaves older generations feeling a sense of loss. Similar themes emerge in the *Valley* trilogy.

Peter Merrington (2003: 45) speaks of Virginia Woolf and Vita Sackville-West as providing good examples in their writing of the nostalgic modernism that can also be seen in Leipoldt's trilogy. To this one might add, as already mentioned, Lawrence's *The Rainbow*, with its generational arrangement that anticipates Leipoldt's structuring of the *Valley* trilogy, although Kannemeyer (1999: 480) finds, in a letter Leipoldt wrote to a relative, that he was more directly inspired by Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks* (1901), set in the nineteenth century and tracing four generations of a wealthy German family.

Leipoldt's trilogy traces the armature of South African modernity. Although concerned most obviously with white South African modernity, (Leipoldt's text draws attention to the way in which this modernity exists in an awkward or uncomfortable relationship with the modernity of black South Africans) this is called into question by Leipoldt himself through an interest in the impact of modernity across racial boundaries. The first novel, *Gallows Gecko*, is set in the late 1830s and all of the 1840s<sup>51</sup> and actively debates the Voortrekker history, which was believed by Afrikaners to be the cornerstone of Afrikaner modernity. *Stormwrack* places the South African War as the site of change in modern South Africa, and this ties to theories promulgated by the likes of Benedict Anderson of a revolutionary event that ushers in a pronounced engagement between nationalism and modernity<sup>52</sup>. *The Mask* takes place in the 1920s, the period regularly believed to have produced the most famous Western modernist works. In this novel, the relationship between nationalism and modernity is the background for the story of a family being split apart by a scandal that at the same time reads as a vicious attack on white South African politics.

To write a thesis focused exclusively on another white, historical figure in South African history seems inimical in 2012, for good reasons. In 2012, different population groups in South Africa are still trying to find ways of reflecting their own societal self-understandings post-1994 without these self-understandings always being in the shadow of apartheid. To reach into history and explore the work of a known white writer who was unfortunately misread in his time might not seem a compelling case. However, I argue that Leipoldt's anti-

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<sup>51</sup> This a period often identified in Europe as the onset of a sustained period of modernisation with increased movements in and around cityscapes that spawned more writing about cities and also an increased documentary awareness of colonised, non-Western space.

<sup>52</sup> See Anderson, B. (1983)

nationalism deserves scope not to make an argument for what could have been, but to acknowledge the darker, vaguer areas along the path to constructing a literary modernism of South Africa. There were oversights and important works that were neglected on both sides of the already-extant racial divide in pre-apartheid South Africa. These oversights and initially ‘lost’ moments form part of the overall idea of South African modernism: it is as much about voices heard as it is about silences, usually forced silences. This is a prevalent idea I think Leipoldt’s writing ties into.

In unpacking the trilogy, a surfeit of topics is revealed that all merit some discussion as most of them are readily aligned with issues that dominated cultural thinking in the early twentieth century, both in the Cape (Merrington, 2003: 43) and in Europe. To that extent, Leipoldt’s *modus operandi* was chiefly to write his South African story shown in the trilogy into perceived European forms. He may not have engaged much with twentieth century European modernists but he regularly returned to the proto-modernists of the nineteenth century, namely Baudelaire, Flaubert and James. Yet, in *The Mask*, there is a begrudging nod to more or less modernist tendencies (begrudging given the tone of some of Leipoldt’s journalistic criticisms when discussing modern European literature) apparent in European literature at the time. Apart from discussing some of the literary penchants of each novel in Leipoldt’s trilogy, this thesis – given the forceful way in which Leipoldt utilises South African history as an almost provocative entity in his fiction – also proposes to engage with this history by examining how Leipoldt took from the trail of South Africa’s modernity to construct his large project. There are discourses on “family, biology, cultural endeavour, manners and education, land ownership, community practises” (2003: 43) that speak to nineteenth century social dynamics that would be represented in literature well into the twentieth century.

Of interest regarding Leipoldt’s project is that a backdrop of his narrative is the tussle between English heritage projects and Afrikaner heritage projects in the twentieth century, and as such the trilogy has numerous jibes at the Union of South Africa, formed in 1910. It is as if Leipoldt, with glee, changes the antagonist-protagonist relationship of English and Afrikaner relationships according to which historiographical strain he absorbs. In *Stormwrack*, it could be argued that for all the condemning of Republican thinking done by the novel’s main characters, there remains a vestige of at-fault English superiority in the narrative, revealed as a desperate but pointless need to assert colonial dominance on people happy to be colonials. In *The Mask*, the progressive characters bemoan childishness apparent

in Afrikaner nationalism, an annoying habit of forever assuming the role of victim against a supposed bullying English attitude even after crucial Afrikaner victories have been achieved. Both sides brought uncomfortable modernisation to their heritage duels: the shaping factor of war and its consequences marched into the Valley in English boots in *Stormwrack* (although, poignantly, the ultimatum to war was issued by the Republicans), while nationalist Afrikaners concerned themselves with “demographic manipulation, social engineering, the ‘poor white problem’, labour and technology” (2003: 45) in the 1920s of *The Mask*. Both sides were inclined to pageantry and folkloric visions and both, ironically, displayed an organic nostalgia, fighting to claim romantic natural scenery even as they battled for rights to the modern South Africa. These debates are dramatised in the trilogy.

However, it is not only the trilogy itself that contains Leipoldt’s combination of nineteenth century ideas of the modern with twentieth century dissatisfaction with it. In constructing the appearance of Leipoldt as a South African modernist, it is necessary to find similarly strong urges in his other writing. Immediately, one may be tempted to turn to his strongest literary form of expression, poetry, but while other facets of his modernist guise to be found there, including his Orientalist discourse (Viljoen, 1996: 1-20) and the first signs of his disputing a national artistic identity of *volk* poet, that ill-fitted him, are enticing, Leipoldt’s prose in both Afrikaans and English, I argue, is more useful in connecting to the ideas of the *Valley* trilogy. Therefore, to augment an understanding of exactly how he can be drawn as a modernist, this thesis draws on Leipoldt’s Afrikaans journalism and critical essays on literature (mostly in Afrikaans, although two notable pieces are in English) alongside one of his Afrikaans novels, *Die Moord op Muisenberg* (1931) (The Murder in Muizenberg) and selected pieces from his English memoir, *Bushveld Doctor* (1937, reprinted 1980). As already stated, elements of his life story are imperative to emphasise, as so much of the biographical data is interwoven with the prose.

In reading Leipoldt as a modernist I draw on recent historical scholarship on the period covered in the trilogy to explore the way in which Leipoldt attempts to reimagine the South African nation outside the dominant tropes of the time. The objective of this method is to locate both the disjunctive sites between Leipoldt’s fiction and history, as well as the disjunctive sites between the epoch of South African modernity and modernity in Europe. The modernism the study seeks to locate lies in the set of correspondences and differences between South African and European modernity of the period; in this case the set period is

from the 1830s to the 1930s, as presented in the primary books under scrutiny. My main literary enquiry is focused on the *Valley* trilogy as well as the European writings from the same period that influenced Leipoldt, or those with which he showed some form of engagement.

Secondly, the alternative reading of history in the trilogy, I argue, is informed by an authorial viewpoint situated in the 1930s. In this thesis I contend that Leipoldt was dissatisfied with South Africa's dominant political parties in the 1930s and unhappy with what he perceived to be uneven cultural development between all South Africans. However, his reservations were squarely about Afrikaans and English-speaking white South Africans, as shown by much of his critical and fictional writing. The *Valley* trilogy's alternative reading of history serves as a fictional outlet for many of Leipoldt's grievances against white South Africa, and to that end Leipoldt's writing that predates, corresponds with or follows the writing of the *Valley* trilogy between 1929 and 1932 forms part of the research presented in this thesis. Leipoldt's own intention for the *Valley* trilogy is therefore important to remember:

These three are separated and independent but closely related books, that are designed to describe the history of a small semi-rural community in the Cape Colony from 1820 until 1930. Each book is complete in itself, but the three together are necessary to outline the environment and to explain the changes that have taken place in the course of a century in the relations between the English and Dutch speaking element of the community. (Quoted in Kannemeyer, 1999: 543)

Because of my argument for Leipoldt's authorial viewpoint meriting closer examination, a substantial part of my research is focused on Leipoldt himself. Much of his life story reads as an interesting chronicle of an individual's experience of a nation's shifts from colonial protectorate, through war, to union and nationalism. Leipoldt's writing observed and documented these shifts as they were happening, making him, in the context of this thesis's study, a chronicler of events. Often Leipoldt's chronicling lay in his immediate commentary on current events, but what is different in the *Valley* trilogy is a sense that Leipoldt revisits some of his earlier opinions, for instance, on the South African War.

Therefore, the ‘making’ of a South African modernism mentioned in the title of this thesis is a reference to the sustained imaginative project of the *Valley* trilogy, its interaction with history and its bearing of the imprint of Leipoldt’s polemic. The ‘making’ also refers to the historical sweep of the trilogy and its depiction of the development of the modern South Africa. The critique of this modern South Africa to be found in the trilogy (and interlinked with other Leipoldt works) emerges as a unique fictional commentary on South African modernity in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and because this commentary gives voice, or a vocabulary, to certain ideas, stresses and concerns about the course of the modern South Africa along segregated lines, the trilogy emerges as a modernist document, conceived and written (but not published) at a high point (the 1930s) in the recognition and identification of the make-up of twentieth century South Africa.

The emphasis of this thesis is the interaction of two large stories: that of modern South Africa between the 1830s and 1930s, following the course of Leipoldt’s fictional sweep, and the story of Leipoldt himself as an enigmatic figure entwined in the historical, socio-political and psychological components of the source materials of his work.

### ***Chapter Layout***

This thesis offers a close reading of the primary texts of the *Valley* trilogy and also refers regularly to other writings by Leipoldt, most obviously his journalism. The formal approach is limited to a predominantly historicist understanding of the trilogy, with a strong emphasis on the interaction between the fictional settings and their historical contexts. The *Valley* trilogy, in my estimation, is underscored by a consistent engagement between its own fiction and the historical contexts it is framed in.

The focus on historical context is already revealed to be a core component of the thesis even before the chapters about the novels in the trilogy. It will be necessary to define and unpack the terms ‘modernity’ and ‘modernism’ in order to provide a framework for the reading of the trilogy. The South African example of modernism will be proposed and elaborated in order for it to stand up to the scrutiny applied to the novels of the trilogy. Central to the idea of a South African modernism are the concepts of ‘geomodernities’ and ‘geomodernisms’, the study of modernities and modernisms from countries that are distinctly different to Western models.

It is not only the idea of South African modernism that is, ultimately, proposed, but the description of Leipoldt himself as a modernist. Contingent upon the argument for the geomodern, the Leipoldt observed in this thesis is called a ‘reluctant’ modernist for a variety of reasons, all of which will be examined. Leipoldt the modernist is, in this thesis, a writer persistently engaging with modernity and documenting it in fiction as well as journalism. The points of contact between modernity and nationalism, both for their intersections and disagreements, are focus areas the thesis returns to regularly. The *Valley* trilogy is fundamentally an anti-nationalist project but not exclusively so, not limited by a need to remain a set of texts largely concerned with political situations. Rather, the dual interests the trilogy shows in modernity and nationalism, and the level of incidence as well as divergence between the two, are analysed in different ways throughout the thesis, although their connection to Leipoldt (and Leipoldt’s role within South African modernity and South African nationalism) is always foregrounded.

What occurs in this thesis are regular attempts at ‘forging’ the concept of South African modernism and Leipoldt as a modernist writer through determined, vexing but particular connections between varieties of disparate sources. Against the fact that South African modernism is an under-explored topic without much literature committed to it, the attempts made by this thesis to suggest paths to establishing lasting impressions of modernism in South Africa. Irregular efforts are maintained throughout the thesis to forge links between various elements of the history of the country and how aspects of modernism can be identified from it and represented in literature.

Chapter Two will explore the idea of South African modernism through discussing areas of its interaction with Western modernism. In order to do this, this chapter defines and foregrounds the terms modernity, modernism and nationalism, arguing that they are divergent as well as interrelated points in the reading of the *Valley* trilogy. Relevant topics pertaining to Western modernism are used as linking devices to assist in describing South African modernism. However, the acknowledgement of uneven modernities between different countries also stimulates a similar discussion around the different trajectories of modernism. The works of Loren Kruger and Jed Esty are regularly consulted in this chapter to help strengthen a case for South African modernism and Leipoldt’s part in it. The final objective, and a prelude to the following chapter, is to make a case for Leipoldt, as author of the *Valley*



*trilogy*, as a strong voice commenting on South African culture and including these comments in a fictional forum that moves on a tension between tradition and modernity.

Chapter Three aims to describe Leipoldt as a modernist writer, but this description is framed by his nineteenth century interests expressed in his general writing as well as in the *Valley* trilogy. Leipoldt's appeals to nineteenth century European thinking relating to science, progress and eugenics contrast his social reality in twentieth century South Africa, where modernity is entangled with nationalism in ways that, to Leipoldt, suggest national regression. It is a directive of the thesis to show that the tension between Leipoldt's nineteenth century meditations and his twentieth century social realities cast him as a reluctant modernist. The reluctance of Leipoldt's modernism speaks to his tendency to identify 'modern' ideas of progress in nineteenth century thinking and to almost-exclusively ascribe to those views rather than acknowledge what they evolve or devolve into in the twentieth century. This approach typifies his fiction as well, which contains notable stylistic traits common to the nineteenth century yet which endures as the selected mode of imagining and documenting the twentieth century. To that end, this chapter studies Leipoldt's propensity towards an earlier form of modernism in his work, a form closer to turn-of-the-century writers than to the better known Western modernists of the 1910s and 1920s. Leipoldt's own experiences of the West as a traveller in Europe between 1902 and 1911 are also considered important to this chapter's sketch of him as a modernist.

Chapter Four looks at the first novel in the *Valley* trilogy, *Gallows Gecko*, and discusses the alternative history it proposes through the narrative of a class of Cape farmers who define themselves as being against the Great Trek and the Republicanism it would inspire. In this alternative reading of history, the focus on modernity revolves around the Great Trek and events and historical figures marginal to the narrative of the Trek. In this chapter, these historical figures are designated as the seen and the unseen, in the form of missionaries that help advance modernity and the 'unseen' slave labour that played a role in settling the utopian space presented in the novel. The concentration on slaves and missionaries in this chapter seeks to reveal contradictory tendencies in the novel which undermine the apparent good-naturedness between characters, suggesting an uneven modernity taking place in the novel as well as in its alternative reading of history. The reliance on historical studies is prevalent in this chapter as it deals with the most outwardly 'historical' novel of the trilogy



with its period setting and vision of life in the Cape Colony at the time of the Great Trek and the founding of the Republics in South Africa.

Chapter Five focuses on *Stormwrack*, the middle novel of the trilogy that is set before and during the South African War of 1899 to 1902. The novel's emphasis on nineteenth century ideas of heritage in English culture is explored by showing how the novel interprets and incorporates heritage practices of the period into the storyline. The garden that is much admired in the novel provides the impetus for discussing how the novel references the nineteenth century English heritage project, which involved the cultivation of showcase gardens. This chapter also focuses on the novel's depiction of a shift occurring in the Valley community through emerging Republican ideas about nationhood.

Chapter Six presents a discussion on *The Mask* as well as a study of relevant aspects of Afrikaner nationalism during the first quarter of the twentieth century in South Africa. The chapter is devoted to examining the ways the novel criticises both nationalism and modernity. The closeness of nationalism and modernity is pursued in this chapter's twin focus on *The Mask* as well as Leipoldt's role as a journalist during the 1920s, thereby drawing the author and the fiction closer together. While this approach is not regularly associated with modernist studies, the degree to which Leipoldt's humanitarian outlook and public opinions are present in *The Mask* makes the twin focus another method of exploring the complex modernism Leipoldt belongs to. The concepts of Benedict Anderson as well as the biographical research on Leipoldt by J.C. Kannemeyer provide the two most notable critical inputs driving this chapter.

Chapter Seven is a short conclusion summarising Leipoldt's critique of Afrikaner culture in the *Valley* trilogy, as well as the trilogy's potential to be included in the kind of thinking displayed by Jed Esty around the links between colonial literature and modernism. In this chapter I also aim to bring to a point a reading of Leipoldt as a beguiling, shape-shifting figure trying to record the flow of modernity in twentieth century South Africa.

## CHAPTER 2: MODERNISMS

In my reading of the *Valley* trilogy, I consider the text in relation to three related concepts: modernisation, modernity and modernism, although the two latter terms emerge more strongly than the first one. The reason for this is to provide focus points for elements of my study that will surface later in the chapters on the three novels. At first, I provide basic definitions of the terms as I understand them, with brief motivations for the reasons I use these terms and in which ways I do so. However, I also refer to how other writers, in important works cited in this thesis, define and use the same terms. This I do in order to illustrate certain pertinent ways these terms were thought of and employed in major critical discourses. To provide this framework is to reveal the different points of my approach to the *Valley* trilogy: a style and genre-mixing project, partly comedy, partly social critique, partly melodrama, partly in bildungsroman form, partly in realist form and partly an example of a text that could be considered an example of global modernism, another concept I explore in this chapter. This chapter introduces a way of appraising the *Valley* trilogy as a modernist project but one that is representative of an unevenness of modernities and modernisms between countries.

Modernity, in this chapter and throughout the rest of this thesis, describes shared experiences between people living in worlds in which rapid change always occurs. Firstly, I explore the term for its widespread appropriation by writers wishing to describe the social, political, economic and epistemic changes brought about by technological and social innovation and progress, usually in Europe in the nineteenth century. The set of changes that is usually connoted by the ideas of progress in science and philosophical thinking was believed to have occurred largely in Europe and North America in the second half of the nineteenth century, according to certain studies up until, approximately, the 1960s<sup>53</sup>. In this chapter I pay attention to those estimations but also break away from them to pursue other ideas that situate modernity as taking place in other countries as well. Here, my focus will narrow to South Africa during the middle and late nineteenth century, as well as the early twentieth century to trace and discuss aspects of modernity that accord with the primary fictional text under

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<sup>53</sup> See Wagner (2012), p. 119

scrutiny in this thesis. In this section on modernity I also briefly discuss the term modernisation, as the tangible evidence of modernity, or its visible building blocks found in technological advancement, corporate power and industry. Modernisation, in short, is the proof of modernity and necessarily so, as modernity can assume ephemeral and elusive qualities challenging to describe accurately, being a “phenomenon of great diversity and richness, hard, if not impossible, to summarise” (Osborne, 1996: 348).

Following the discussion on modernity, I apply a similar reading method to the concept of modernism. I argue that modernism provided alternative views of the modern world mostly expressed artistically, but also in civil practises such as engineering and urban design. For the most part, though, my emphasis is on artistic expression and the perspective such expression applies in describing the modern world. Modernism, in this chapter, is firstly discussed as an epistemic *finding*<sup>54</sup> of a vocabulary for modernity, but not necessarily a vocabulary that works in agreement with modernity, or a vocabulary that functions on a set of rules. Rather, I hope to realise how differential modernisms can be approached, modernisms in ‘unlikely’ places. This I stress when I attempt to ‘follow’ modernism outside of its known Western borders and observe how it navigates itself in South Africa between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In some ways this will be a comparative study of Western and non-Western modernisms, but not exclusively so. The comparative study is useful because the *Valley* trilogy, as well as Leipoldt’s ideas about European literary culture in his critical writing, make constant references to artistic and cultural events in Europe.

The section on modernism and differential modernism then segues into a proposal for recognising a form of South African modernism. This section aims to show how a literary modernism can be traced through aspects of South African modernity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, incorporating points made in the preceding sections.

The chapter will then move to a consideration of the colonial bildungsroman of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century which, following Jed Esty’s argument is a crucial early marker of pre and post-World War I modernist literature in the West. This study is important because it claims that certain features of Western modernism regarding stylistic content and

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<sup>54</sup> I think of this as finding, from the point of view of a researcher, and discovering rather than a premeditated movement towards establishing a vocabulary for artistic expressions of/about/against modernity.

storytelling tropes were evident in literature emanating from outside the West. This point will then be explored in relation to Leipoldt and the *Valley* trilogy.

### **Modernity**

Modernity, as defined by many scholars today, engages those social changes implied in becoming modern—urbanization, industrialization, wage labor and factory systems and so on—while modernism designates artistic practises associated with modernity... the claim to modernity... is better understood as being open and not necessarily limited to a universalized European construct or monopoly. (Hassan, 2010: 454)

According to Marshall Berman, “modern environments and experiences cut across all boundaries of geography and ethnicity, of class and nationality, of religion and ideology: in this sense, modernity can be said to unite all mankind” (Berman, 1988: 15). The term ‘modern’ most strongly marks the shift away from feudalism to industrialisation and capitalism (Barker, 2005: 444), emphasising the break from a past. The location of the modern was usually fixed in the Western world, yet post-colonial studies of the last quarter century persistently re-interrogate both the time and the space of modernism<sup>55</sup>. Africa was only afforded brief attention owing to the colonial perception of Africa being pre-modern, a space resistant to history yet nevertheless a crucial ingredient to the modernist recipe through colonialism, the seized space that fed the empires.

Phases of modernity can be debated ad infinitum. Perry Anderson speculates that a definite first phase of modernity ran from the sixteenth century to the end of the eighteenth (1984: 98). For the purposes of this thesis I will concentrate on what some writers, including Berman and Michel Foucault, designate as classical modernity: the period of the entire nineteenth century and early twentieth century. Berman identifies Goethe’s *Faust* (1808 and 1832) as the quintessential early modern text in the Western world. Berman, in his book *All That Is Solid Melts into Air*, sees *Faust* as an early text for discussing the relations between modernism and modernity. He identifies modernity as “a mode of vital experience of space and time” that is universally shared, one that promises transformation but also destruction of tradition, a “maelstrom” or a “unity of disunity” (Berman, 1988: 15). Modernisation Berman defines as the “social processes that bring this maelstrom into being, and keep it in a state of perpetual

<sup>55</sup> See Brooker & Thacker (eds.), 2005, Gikandi (2007) and Hassan (2010).

becoming” and he defines modernism as “a variety of visions and ideas that aim to make men and women the subjects as well as objects of modernization, to give them the power to change the world that is changing them” (1988: 15). Another influential text (one Berman cites in his book) which attempts to define the concept of modernity is Baudelaire’s “The Painter of Modern Life”. In this essay Baudelaire describes modernity as “the transient, the fleeting, the contingent” (Baudelaire, 1965: 403). Both Baudelaire and Berman identify modernity as a shared experience, a break from the past that is perpetual and immovable yet symbolic of movement. To Baudelaire modernity is fleeting and transitory (1965: 403), always in flux and only identifiable for a moment before it expires and ossifies into a newer moment. In deriving the title of his book from a quote by Karl Marx, Berman’s definition of modernity agrees with Baudelaire but only by augmenting Baudelaire’s ideas with the dramatic symbol of the maelstrom that both creates and destroys. Later in this thesis, while framing some of my findings in Berman’s terms, I also pay attention to Leipoldt’s fascination with Baudelaire and how he was influenced by the famous nineteenth century French writer.

Perry Anderson, in a discussion of Berman’s book, agrees with its finding that nineteenth century modernity owes its transformation to economic development, or the immediate influence augured by the advent of the capitalist world market (1984: 98). Anderson argues that nineteenth century capitalist expansion inspired a “tremendous emancipation of the possibility and the sensibility of the individual self” (1984: 98), going along a route opened up by the Enlightenment, but also that “the very same onrush of capitalist economic development also generates a brutally alienated and atomized society, riven by callous economic exploitation and cold social indifference” (1984: 98).

Historically, Baudelaire and Berman’s views correlate with a “common” view that the term modernity refers to a “novel kind of society that emerged from a sequence of major transformations in Europe and North America, culminating in the industrial and democratic revolutions of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries” (Wagner, 2012: 3). The emphasis on ‘revolution’ can be found in Baudelaire’s references to the 1848 European revolutions and how Baudelaire thinks about the modern environment thereafter, experiencing changes that indicate a shift in social being (Baudelaire, 1972: 401, 416). However, looking beyond the West, Berman’s general Marxist notions culminate in his seeing the need for “modern men and women” to assert their dignity and “their right to

control their future”, a directive towards struggles for democracy<sup>56</sup> and to place such assertions in “the streets... to the public square” (Berman, 1988: 11-12). Going back to the previously-held “common ideas” that modernity in the West emerged from a sequence of major transformations, Wagner summarizes the limited thinking about modernity that persisted throughout much of the twentieth century:

Significantly, this view often entails both that these transformations catapulted Europe (or the West) to the front position in the course of world history and that the thus established western model would diffuse worldwide because of its inherent superiority. Thinking about modernity thus meant thinking about globalization, even though these terms have come into frequent use only since the 1980s and 1990s respectively. Global-or universal-significance was claimed for European modernity from the very beginning. (2012: 3)

The above quote indicates why studies of differential modernities and modernisms are necessary, otherwise the term ‘modernity’ is problematically associated only with the West. While Berman’s book disputes that the western model of modernity is the only one that mattered, and Wagner draws attention to the fact that even before Berman’s book there was criticism of the idea that modernity is a product of the West (2012: 3, 5), a widespread sociological understanding of modernity excluded many other countries, mostly African ones, and considered them as being *premodern*, or still having to undergo processes of modernity (2012: 119). Exactly what these processes may have been appear in the final definition of modernity I will quote:

Modernity is the belief in the freedom of the human being and in the human capacity to reason, combined with the intelligibility of the world, that is, its amenability to human reason. In a first step towards concreteness, this basic commitment translates into the principles of individual and collective self-determination and in the expectation of ever-increasing mastery of nature and ever more reasonable interaction between human beings. The Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen (1793), as well as the granting of commercial

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<sup>56</sup> In my reading, this is an acknowledgement that modernity was present outside Europe and North America in countries where, often, the fight for democracy was active (as in Brazil and South Africa); until the 1960s, an intellectual closed-mindedness treated non-Western countries as “behind”, not yet modern—see Wagner (2012), p. 3-10.

freedom, can be understood as an application of these underlying principles of modernity, as can the technical transformations captured by the term ‘industrial revolution’. These principles were seen as *universal*, on the one hand, because they contained normative claims to which, one presumed, every human being would subscribe and, on the other, because they were deemed to permit the creation of functionally superior arrangements for major aspects of human social life... Furthermore, they were seen as *globalizing* in their application because of the interpretative and practical power of normativity and functionality. (2012: 4-5).

The perception that these doctrines would be automatically universally transferable, or globalizing, was an error in assumption, a vision that all countries could merely follow the Western model. There were doubts about this in the nineteenth century but a European confidence in progress and superiority was the sense that prevailed (Wagner, 2012: 5). This was a confidence strengthened by the European colonial endeavour that was, ironically, encroaching on some of the human rights that were, as the quote above suggests, supposedly part of the social demands of modernity.

Modernisation is the application of modernity in day-to-day life in the West. The term modernisation I read as the processes, also described by Berman (1988: 16), by which these doctrines of modernity were applied, the set of tools that helped put modernity into practise, namely industrialisation, capitalism and (later) colonialism that would lead, by the twentieth century, to “immense demographic upheavels, severing millions of people from their ancestral habitats, hurtling them halfway across the world into new lives” (1988: 16), urban swelling in major Western metropolises and growing “systems of mass communication” (1988: 16). To be modern was to have experienced the changes modernity brought about through modernisation; it was to be ‘up to speed’ with the world. The maelstrom Berman mentions refers to the twin sensations of gaining and loss: gaining the present and (hopefully) the future but losing traditions and beliefs of the past. Modernity spoke of trying to place order on things that were constantly changing, a system of order and chaos as “modern twins” (Bauman, 1991: 4).

In this thesis I am interested in looking at a differential modernity, or an example of global modernity in South Africa during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Western powers, by the late nineteenth century, contributed to the system of order and chaos through colonialism.



Colonised African countries were perceived to be underdeveloped and uncivilised (Brooker & Thacker, 2005: 3-5) and Western metropolises established sovereignty over them. Western modernisation was sustained and influenced by its colonial industry and Western modernity, by the late nineteenth century, increasingly turned on the profits of colonialism, of takeover and exploitation. There was no sense of equality in this project, as attitudes of European superiority defined the colonial presence.

In the South African example, facets of English life, commercial enterprise and education played a shaping role in South African modernity in the nineteenth century, largely in the English colonies at the Cape and the former Natal. English settlers that had arrived in 1820 in the wake of the second British occupation of the Cape in 1806 brought with them methods of farming and land governance from England. The abolition of slavery in the 1830s placed South Africa as contemporary with other parts of the world where slavery had been terminated, placing an emphasis on equal human rights that expanded to a liberal, non-racial franchise by the 1850s in the Cape Legislative Assembly (Dooling, 1999). The ending of slavery was an early example of the differences between the government's emphasis on the modern way of liberalism across the colour lines set against the smaller, rural Cape Dutch<sup>57</sup> communities not in favour of racial equality or liberalism. Commercial regulation by the Colonial government of wine and wheat farming by the late nineteenth century saw Cape farmers advancing in their farming methods and until the diamond and gold mining booms, the latter in the Boer republic of Transvaal, this was the primary economic evidence of modernity in South Africa (Giliomee, 1987). Culturally, English and German missionaries sent to South Africa in the nineteenth century played a major role in campaigning for the abolishment of slavery and educated "non-white" South Africans according to English/European school curriculums, placing an emphasis on equal civil rights and English respectability. Most Cape farmers lived contentedly as colonial subjects, part of the British Empire and pledging allegiance to Queen Victoria (Giliomee, 2003a). These farmers, through the colonial connection, were part of the modern world.

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<sup>57</sup> Although it is difficult to place the chronology of the evolution of the term Afrikaner, it is perhaps more accurate suggest that in the 1830s, with Dutch still widely spoken, the farmers of the Great Trek can be called Cape Dutch. With the more frequent use of Afrikaans by the late nineteenth century, Cape Dutch farmers may be categorised as Cape Dutch/Afrikaners while those settled in the republics were known as Boers. By the early twentieth century the description Afrikaner became widespread for Afrikaans-speaking white South Africans.



The breakaway of disgruntled and unsatisfied Cape Dutch farmers in the 1830s after the abolition of slavery and their own differences with the colonial government lead to the founding of the independent Boer republics in the 1840s and 1850s (Giliomee & Mbenga, 2008). The former Cape farmers established self-rule, outside of the jurisdiction of the English government and for decades lived independently until the discovery of gold in the Transvaal in the 1880s placed this republic at the centre of international attention. The increased presence of mostly English and European foreigners, bringing with them superior mining skills and administrative ability thrust the Transvaal squarely into modern industrial capitalism. The Transvaal, then, after years of existing detached from English colonial rule and its international connections became a main player in South African modernity, more recognisable than the previously more-progressive Cape (Giliomee, 1987 and Tamarkin, 1996).

The modernity Leipoldt's trilogy focuses begins during the 1830s, with the story of this South African modernity, according to the narrative scheme, commencing with the movement out of the Cape by the unhappy farmers who would go on to found the independent Boer republics. The dynamics of cultural relationships and of shifts between tradition and the modern are apparent throughout the trilogy. There is much commentary in the trilogy pertaining to South Africa's becoming part of the modern world through, firstly, Imperialism and then the economic surge of the diamond and gold mines. The trilogy primarily examines the cultural impact these entries to modernity had on the two white sections of the country and, by extension, the larger "non-white" population. In this thesis, the retrospective meditations of C.L. Leipoldt on a hundred-year period of South African history offer a critique, steeped in nineteenth century ideas (the bulk of the trilogy is located in that century), of the sometimes violent changes that ushered in South African twentieth century modernity.

### ***Modernism***

Richard Ellman says that if a moment must be found for human character to have changed, 'I should suggest that 1900 is both more convenient and more accurate than Virginia Woolf's 1910', since the modernist theme sounds through the Edwardian period. (Ellman & Feidelson, 1965: vi)

The term modernism is defined by Perry Anderson as the twentieth century vocabulary for the experience of modernity (1984: 102). In this thesis, I view modernism as the artistic articulation of and response to this experience of modernity. One typical characteristic of the experience of modernity is sudden change, war and revolution. In the case of Western modernism the moment of revolutionary change was World War I<sup>58</sup>; my argument for South African modernism locates the ‘revolution’ earlier in the South African War.

A chronology of Western modernism across different countries is difficult to discern accurately because of the different time periods of their embryonic elements. However, most critics agree that, in order, the prevalent trends began in France, Scandinavia, Germany, England and North America.<sup>59</sup> Bradbury and McFarlane insist that, taken outside of exact chronological placement, modernism could still be pared down to “an extraordinary compound of the futuristic and the nihilistic, the revolutionary and the conservative, the naturalistic and the symbolistic, the romantic and the classical...It was the celebration of a technological age and a condemnation of it... and in most of these countries the fermenting decade was the 1890s” (1991: 46). I include Bradbury and MacFarlane’s emphasis on the 1890s because the decade is of particular significance for the central novel of the trilogy, *Stormwrack*, a novel that deals with the changes brought about by the South African War to the Valley folk. It documents the loss of Cape tradition to nihilism and uncertainty about the future.

Frank Kermode writes about the ‘chiliastic’ effect of the turning of a century. His book, *The Sense of an Ending*, examines the sense of birth and apocalypse which occurs with the ending of one century and the starting of another, a something which often finds expression in modernist fiction:

...it helps distil men’s millenarian disposition to think about crisis, to reflect on history as revolution or cycle, to consider, as so many *fin-de-siecle* and *aube-de-siecle* minds did consider, the question of endings and beginnings, the going and coming of the world...  
(Bradbury & McFarlane, 1991: 51)

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<sup>58</sup> See Stevenson (1992), p. 129-153

<sup>59</sup> See Connolly, C. (1965)

The purpose of focusing on Kermode's quote is to draw attention to the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, taking into account the increased leaning towards Nietzschean<sup>60</sup> ideas about chaos and a revolutionary period of transition. In the South African War, there was such a period that both ended the nineteenth and started the twentieth century, and in its wake came the intertwining of a particular form of modernity and a particular kind of nationalism. This intertwining would influence South African history until almost the end of the twentieth century<sup>61</sup>, and, I argue, in the *Valley* trilogy (and *Stormwrack* in particular), would produce a modernist commentary by a writer who had experienced the 'chiliastic' effect of this revolutionary modernity first-hand. The modernist twentieth century, in this view, was inducted through a war fought at a colonial outpost, and the implication is that South Africa experienced a turning point that predates the revolutionary turning point of Western high modernism: World War I in 1914. To instigate a comparative or contrasting study of modernism in Europe and modernism in South Africa, differential components need to be considered.

In *The Location of Culture*, Homi K. Bhabha comments on the necessity of reconsidering the concepts of modernity and modernism in light of a postcolonial point of view, looking back at the 1880-1930 period that seems the most stable chronological freezing of 'when' modernism happened in the West. Jameson (1990: 44) also points to this period, reminding us that the Berlin Conference of 1884 and the 'Scramble for Africa' saw the onset of new "mutations" in the inner forms of literature in the West, and that imperialism was a shaping factor in this. Bhabha urges for a recognition that modernism and modernity in the West is reliant on the world of the colonies (1994: 250). Jameson suggests that including literatures from previously excluded countries (as far as surveying of modernism in its classic period goes) resulted in an interrogation of the definition of modernism, and regards Latin American literature as the "principal player on the scene of world culture" in relation to these shifts (1990: 48).

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<sup>60</sup> Berman argues that, for Nietzsche, "...the currents of modern history were ironic and dialectical. The results were the traumatic events that Nietzsche called 'the death of God' and 'the advent of nihilism'. 'God is dead' connected with those sharing enthusiasm for Darwinism after the 1860s, and Nietzsche's views of the world as without structure and rationality further questioned religion and the notion of absolute truth. See Berman (1988), p. 21 and Stevenson (1992), p. 68-69

<sup>61</sup> See Nasson (2010)

Familiar metropolitan areas of modernism, like London, Paris, Vienna and New York have been rethought, in the writings of Edward Said, Andreas Huyssen, M. Salah Hassan, Chris Gogwilt, Scott McCracken and Jon Hegglund for their connections to the colonies that fed them. The standard axis of, for instance, London-New York could be supplemented with a consideration of the London-Cape Town axis. What new insights about modernism might emerge if Cape Town was no longer seen as *subordinate* to London but rather on an equal plane? To look back and find other modernisms is an exercise in tracing the “uneven, geo-historical distribution of modernisms” (Brooker & Thacker, 2005: 3).

Modernism, no matter how geographically distributed, remains (and is thought to be, in this thesis) a recording device of historical changes that are, basically, the evidence of modernity at work. Modernism is, to quote Friedman, “a domain within a particular modernity” (2010: 474), specific to place and time. However, modernity needs to be pluralised if we are already discussing modernisms in plural, and the oft-contested idea of multiple modernities<sup>62</sup> must emerge if we are to maintain that at the root of the events modernisms record and engage with, we find the modernities that create these events. Modernism counts for the “aesthetic engagements” we encounter in modernity. These aesthetic engagements are captured in modernist works, the evidence of a specific place and time and, for the purpose of my argument, they are works that allow us to re-read and re-think a specific place and time..

### ***Differential Modernisms***

While modernities are better seen as irreducibly plural and fully global, standard theorizations of modernity and modernism, emphasizing Western social transformations and artistic experiments, designate social developments and artistic expressions of other regions as necessarily belated and secondary to the Western modern.  
(Hassan, 2010: 454, 456)

It is not an exaggeration to say that Western colonialism was a force behind Western modernism, but to extend the concept of modernism to colonial territories requires more careful deliberation. To think about modernism in Africa is to be aware of the “uneven, geo-historical distribution of modernisms” (Brooker & Thacker, 2005: 3). The plural form of modernism in this quote refers to both the temporal and spatial variants of modernism in

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<sup>62</sup> See Wagner, P. (2012)

different countries around the world (Huyssen, 2005: 6), as well as the “flexible and sometimes antagonistic relations between the forms of literary ‘modernism’ and the signs of social and economic ‘modernity’ (Brooker & Thacker, 2005: 4).

Through the early twentieth century modernist works of Conrad<sup>63</sup> and Picasso<sup>64</sup>, a Western metropolitan understanding of Africa emerged as being a homogenous place defined by its contrast to modernity, and modernity, in this understanding, was thought to be global (Hegglund, 2005: 44). Set against “dark, primitive”<sup>65</sup> Africa, European culture could revivify itself through the nineteenth century and first half of the twentieth century. Through colonialism, African space could be occupied in a way that fed modern growth in Europe. However, in spite of its “contribution” to European modernity, Africa was not seen as modern or equal to Europe. A typical Western narrative of Africa that emerges at this time is that of a timeless Africa, “stubbornly resisting modernization and autonomy” (2005: 44) and situated outside of history. The figure of the African modernist in such a narrative does not exist, because “there are virtually no indigenous writers or artists that have been allowed to enter the pantheon of modernism” (Hegglund, 2005: 49).

Yet, “non-Western” modernism, as emphasised by post-colonial studies, is becoming more and more recognised, even (or, perhaps, typically) after the fact. In the African context, owing to centuries of slavery, displacement and colonialism,

‘African’ as a concept may signal commonality, in the sense of a shared historical experience, but it is by no means a product of cultural similarities. Such an understanding is crucial to a deeper and more nuanced approach to the analysis and investigation of African modernist practises and Africa’s place within the discourse of modernity... ‘Africa’ and African modernisms are products of this historically complex entity and global presence... (Hassan, 2010: 453)

Colonialism is a factor in the modernities of European countries that held territories in Africa, and the time frame of European modernism “is usually said to last from the mid-nineteenth

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<sup>63</sup> *Heart of Darkness* (1902)

<sup>64</sup> *Demoiselles d’Avignon* (1907), the famous Cubist painting that fused Spanish and African influences

<sup>65</sup> See Hegglund (2005), p. 43. Hegglund is referring to metropolitan perceptions of Africa at the time.

century to the mid-twentieth century” (Huyssen, 2005: 6). In the nineteenth century half of this divide, colonialism is concurrent with a high moment of modernity in Europe, especially in the context of England which during the mid-nineteenth century held colonial territories in South Africa, India, Australia and New Zealand.

Colonial resistance by the emerging Afrikaner class in South Africa in the nineteenth century lead to the South African war at the end of that century. Following the South African War, Afrikaner nationalism emerged as an organised response to colonisation and pursuit of autonomy for white Afrikaans-speakers that utilised “the premises of modernity through individualism, state-organized politics and social improvement” (Boehmer, 2005: 7). This nationalism forged ahead with the growth of Afrikaans as the exclusive, South African language of white South Africans in the twentieth century. This was underscored by the fact that in 1911, merely a year after the Unification of South Africa that was supposed to mend bridges after the South African War between the British and the Afrikaners, the Second Afrikaans Language Movement was started, with the subject of this thesis, Leipoldt, emerging as a reluctant but key player. Benedict Anderson concept of “imagined communities” is useful when thinking about the production of a nationalist community that took place in South Africa during this period. Print media specifically aimed at the development of Afrikaans was implemented in the 1910s and elaborated into an industry by the 1930s. In this, Afrikaner nationalism of the early twentieth century could be seen as an example of what Boehmer describes as the widely differing forms of resistant nationalisms: “nostalgically reactionary, yet modernising at economic and political levels” (2005: 11). The paradoxes of Afrikaner nationalism are explored later in this chapter but to briefly summarise: the imagined communities-type project utilised a tool of modernity, print media, in its modern aims for cultural, economic (in spite of struggles in the 1920s and 1930s) and political autonomy but at its heart it was nostalgic, propagating an older, more rural way of life. In some ways, elements of the Afrikaner Nationalist project at a time of high modernity in South Africa are curiously similar to the vernacular movements in England during the mid-to-late nineteenth century.

At this moment of intensifying modernity in the nineteenth century, England’s industry and commercial enterprise was at a peak<sup>66</sup>, yet vernacular preservation movements were

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<sup>66</sup> See Bullock (1991), p. 59

established to counter this modernity and preserve the heritage of an older, more rural England<sup>67</sup>. The vernacular imperative, a romantic resistance to modernity, referred back to the *ancien regime* of aristocratic elites or landowning classes that Perry Anderson identifies as having been the masters of culture and society in most of Europe before the mid-nineteenth century (Anderson, 1984: 105). In fact, agrarian orders<sup>68</sup> would have been more or less prevalent in Europe until just before World War II (1984: 106), so in the nineteenth century,

European modernism as overarching phenomenon must be located at the threshold of a not yet fully modernized world in which old and new were violently knocked against each other, striking the sparks of that astounding eruption of creativity that came to be known much later as ‘modernism’. (Huyssen, 2005: 7)

This point will be revisited at later stages of this thesis in descriptions of South African modernity and the shaping role played by landowning classes, but for now we concentrate on the elitist factor that characterised European modernism. This factor would, in critical revisiting, be at the root of the retrospective description of ‘high modernism’, designating a ‘high art’ or ‘avant-garde’, as opposed to ‘low modernism’, which was mass culture, another topic to be discussed later in this thesis as a core concern of the *Valley* trilogy. Such highbrow sensibilities denied the “non-West” any participation in the very modernism it fed by way of colonial industry, yet that very industry contributed to the development of modernism in colonial territories. An interesting paradox explored by this thesis is that Leipoldt’s criticisms of modern South Africa are based on comparisons he makes to modern Europe. His criticisms suggest that South Africa should aspire to Europe in its modern growth. Yet, that very Europe, until the South African War, would not have considered South Africa to be modern. The topic of African and South African modernism only seems to have been raised long after the *ex post facto* discussions about Western modernism as a part of postcolonial studies. Clear periods and forms of modernism in Africa and South Africa have not yet been fully identified.

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<sup>67</sup> See Merrington (2003), p. 43

<sup>68</sup> Both Berman and Anderson agree that rural, landowning classes, usually made up of aristocratic families, were a ruling order in most provincial European areas, wealthy leader-type figures in their communities who had strong influence on rural people. In the *Valley* trilogy, a similar class of landed gentry is to be found in *Gallows Gecko* and *Stormwrack*.



According to Hassan, a period of African modernism can be located between 1945 and 1994 (2010: 459), but because of its inconsistency as a phenomenon in Africa, it can also be traced to the beginning of the twentieth century in Egypt, driven by nationalism and anti-colonialism (2010: 459). There, ancient Egyptian art and architecture provided inspiration for new visual vocabularies in re-imagining the nation as modern (2010: 459). The nationalist impulse in this implies “a sense of resistance, for modernity in Africa was born out of the struggle for decolonization” (2010: 459) because “African modernism is clearly nationalistic” (2010: 460).

### ***The Colonial Bildungsroman***

Although in this thesis I make the claim for Leipoldt as a modernist writer, the form of the *Valley* trilogy is decidedly realist, with elements apparently drawn from the *bildungsroman* in the first two novels while the third plays with genre, oscillating between social critique, melodrama, Victorian horror and mystery fiction. Only *The Mask*, by virtue of its period setting of the 1920s, seems to be any kind of candidate for a study of literary modernism. The interaction between South African industrial modernisation, social modernity and the artistic modernism of the trilogy must then be considered and investigated to find their points of correspondence, convergence and also divergence. While my reading of the trilogy may suggest a propensity toward historical accident, it is my hope that the interplay between historical event and Leipoldt’s consistent artistic articulation of numerous events (either in the moment or retrospectively) sheds some light on the peculiar modernism extolled in the trilogy.

If Western modernism is our only point of departure and the works of Proust, Kafka, Woolf, Eliot, Pound, Faulkner and Joyce, to name only a select few, are the only points of reference, we search the *Valley* trilogy in vain for tropes such as stream-of-consciousness, non-linear time, impersonality, character fragmentation, symbols that defy reading but warrant attention, formless narration and scrambled or non-existent plots. I do not think that a mere transplantation of Western modernist tropes should be the core logic to identifying modernism elsewhere, although the question of form remains an important one. Instead I suggest that how the literature is both born of and responds to its historical moment is of particular significance. The impulse to explore the historical circumstances is motivated by, firstly, by my interest in exploring the trilogy’s literary attention to South Africa’s more peripheral ambits of modernity (in this thesis, two of the ambits are the *legacy* of slave



trading in the Cape Colony *after* slave emancipation and the unlikely role of missionaries as agents of modernity). Secondly, I am motivated to explore the shaping role modernity had in white South African literature at a time when culture was becoming a commodity, a way to win a nation through a deliberate language bombardment.

Friedman fears that we may be risking damaging our newer geomodernist propensities by trying to impose, or re-establish, “a particular twentieth century Western aesthetic style” (2010: 474) and asks, “How are we to break the hold of the old modernist mold?” (2010: 474). Friedman, writing in 2010, is situated at a different point of reflection on modernism to the one Berman occupied in the 1980s when his book was published. Whereas Berman hinted at the importance of exploring modernity in countries beyond the West, his concept of modernism does not get outside of the Western paradigm. Friedman, however, is mindful of the need to treat the search for other geomodernities and geomodernisms very carefully, aware that one overarching concept of modernity/modernism cannot be generally applied. I am both wary of breaking the old modernist mold while at the same time fearful that even superficial attempts at ‘transplanting’ tropes and devices would cloud the focus on the modernity the modernism I explore is *recording*. It is vital, in agreement with Friedman, to interrogate the “slash” between modernism/modernity:

The slash both connects and separates; it is the paradox of all borders... I think we should stop positing modernism as modernity’s self-reflexive other... I suggest we regard modernism in its different geohistorical locations and periods as a powerful domain within a particular modernity... From this perspective, modernism is a force effecting change as much as it intersects other domains of change... as the domain of creative expressivity within modernity’s dynamic of rapid change... Modernism is a part of modernity, a part that is centered in modernity’s aesthetic dimension, which is distinct from other dimensions but not separate from them... Every modernity has its distinct modernism. (2010: 475)

In an article that would later unfold into a book, Esty examines Schreiner’s *The Story of an African Farm* and finds that the novel, written towards the end of the nineteenth century and “anticipating a number of modernist fictional techniques” (2007: 407), both incorporates as well as disrupts important aspects of the bildungsroman. Esty argues that the bildungsroman

was a significant outlet for nineteenth century concerns with progress and as such the narrative progression that defines the bildungsroman was a powerful force in literature until the bildungsroman either gave way or morphed into realism, which itself gave way to modernism.

The bildungsroman, in Esty's description, held notions of the industrial West together, namely the idea of progress as a journey from one point to another, encapsulated by the bildungsroman's focus on character growth that often echoed national growth. Bakhtin mentioned that the bildungsroman showed "man growing in national-historic time" (1986: 25). As a nation comes of age, so does a character in a bildungsroman, and Esty's regular references to the Goethean bildungsroman reminds of Berman insisting that the first modern text in literature is Goethe's *Faust*, in which progress is equated with speed: development speaks to a "speed of life" (Berman, 1988:). The bildungsroman was a way of negotiating the impact of modernization, a way to present modernization in a "safe narrative scheme" (Esty, 2007: 412).

However, Esty finds in the thinking of Lukács (and Hannah Arendt) a suggestion that the concept of progress begins to fail from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards owing to the growth of Western capitalism. What Esty, thinking of Arendt, more or less describes as "unrestrained" capitalism (2007: 409) is the impact capitalism in the colonies had on the concept of progress in the colonial bildungsroman. Unrestrained capitalism, in this sense, is British capitalism not monitored or kept in check within its own borders. Instead, it is rampant in the faraway colony, drenched in gold, exploiting cheap labour and breaking away from a nineteenth century idea of national-industrial capitalism. This form of capitalism, ideally, reflected traditional national growth along the lines of 'what England gains, all her citizens gain', but the modern industrial capitalism active in 1890s South Africa broke away from this. In the colonial bildungsroman, this sense of breakage was felt, according to Esty. In the bildungsroman emanating from colonised territories, the ways in which imperialism was influencing modernity suggested a different occurrence in the novel of progress and development. According to Nairn (1977: 337):

...imperialist development involves not merely the annexation of overseas territory by force, but the exploitation of the cheap labour and resources of peripheral regions of the world by metropolitan

capitalists and states...

The colonial bildungsroman spoke, intentionally or unintentionally, of high imperialism, what Arendt saw as national capitalism being replaced by international capitalism as a result of colonial industry (Esty, 2007: 408). During the 1870s and 1880s there was the “increasing intensity and instability of speculative and extractive modes of wealth creation as measured against more traditional lines of industrialization” (2007: 408) and, owing to the discovery of minerals in South Africa, European capitalism could assume less restrained trajectories without the borders of national politics (Arendt, 1968: 136-137). The colonial bildungsroman, Esty argues, began to reflect some of the turpitude of the times by showing the uneven development between colonising and colonised countries and how this upsets nineteenth century ideas of progress and evolution, even before Victorian literature started showing forays into disillusionment and Nietzschean nihilism.

The unique case of Schreiner’s novel, a mix of genres and styles, looked ahead to some of the features of later Western modernist works and in doing so broke “the bildungsroman’s genetic code of progressive temporality” (2007: 407). Esty proposes that youthful characters, whose moral journeys are the focus of the bildungsroman, are never allowed to age and mature with their experience in the colonial bildungsroman represented by Schreiner’s novel, Conrad’s *Lord Jim* and Kipling’s *Kim*. The bildungsroman is, therefore, never concluded, “producing jagged effects on both the politics and poetics of subject formation.” (2007: 411) The stunted or never-ending youth Esty then identifies as occurring in the works of Wilde, Wells and Joyce, among others, to illustrate how the “jagged effects”, apparent in Schreiner’s novel (as possibly the earliest example) carried through into modernism proper by the early twentieth century. In the following section of this chapter I will discuss the role *The Story of an African Farm* plays for an understanding of how the colonial bildungsroman (which this hard-to-categorise novel only resembles in places) became a prelude to modernism in South Africa. The novel is, possibly, South Africa’s first modern literary text.

In South Africa, racial exploitation for labour purposes in the nineteenth century had increased owing to the mining industry as a result of the diamond and gold booms, and this exploitation entered the realm of international capitalism that arrived with the mining boom. Racial eugenics and fears of moral degeneration in Europe (Coetzee, 1988:142-146) as a

result of moral excess rooted in colonial endeavour (which Conrad would look at in *Heart of Darkness*) coincided with the shifts Esty noted in the colonial bildungsroman.

### ***Finding a vocabulary for South African Modernity: A proposal for South African Modernism***

Bill Nasson (2010: 29) writes that the South African War was the start of modern South Africa, the event that coloured the century that followed it. However, events leading to the war could, of course, be traced back many years, and no clear starting point for modern South Africa could emerge necessarily stronger than another. Could a starting point have been the abolition of slavery, or the Colonial government's tariffs on local wines in the Cape, or the Batavian occupation at the Cape, or the twilight of Dutch official rule? Valid arguments could be made for all of the above. In this thesis it is proposed that Leipoldt's trilogy fixes a view of South African modernity that goes back sixty years before the South African War to the events of the 1830s and 1840s. This modernity is obviously a white modernity, based on interactions between the two white sections of South Africa at the expense and neglect of black or "non-white" South Africans. David Attwell writes about this important black South African modernity in his 2005 book *Re-writing Modernity* and surprisingly, this book counts as among the few full texts concerning South African literary modernity in any of its forms. Given the lack of extensive research about South African modernity, the topic of South African modernism is challenging to discuss. Olive Schreiner, Roy Campbell and William Plomer are mentioned by critics as South African literary modernists, but what exactly justifies this thinking? In Plomer and Campbell, certainly, there are experimentations with form and narrative that link them somewhat to examples of Western modernism: Campbell's poem *The Flaming Terrapin* is almost stream-of-consciousness in its form whereas Plomer's novel *Turbotte Wolfe* (1926) shows a tension between country and city that typifies much Western modernist output, as well as linking it to Afrikaans novels written at the same time. However, the tendency to merely ape developments in the West typifies both Plomer and Campbell, two writers who never returned to South Africa after leaving for Europe in the late 1920s.

Schreiner seems to be a forerunner of both. She was the first major South African novelist to emerge, and *The Story of an African Farm*'s harsh colonial landscape offers one way the specificity of South African modernism might be read: from the rural, and not the urban perspective—a reorientation which is particularly useful when thinking about Leipoldt's

work. The world presented in Schreiner's novel is cruel and absurd for sensitive characters because they are alienated from each other and concerned with the impossibility of meaningful engagement with the world. A stylistic element such as the unreliable narrator in the novel emerges as on par with similar devices being toyed with by Henry James at the same time<sup>69</sup>. *The Story of an African Farm* establishes one of the key dialogues of South African literary modernism, namely the dialogue between country and the largely absent city. Schreiner's novel seems distanced from the anti-modern English obsession with preserving and enhancing the vernacular in art that was alive at the time in the 1880s, led by John Ruskin and his lobbying for the National Trust of England<sup>70</sup>. The farm as a mystic, idyllic space for the farmer, a pastoral belief that was at the heart of the vernacular incentive, is disfigured by Schreiner, showing semblances of the impact of modernity without it ever being obvious in the narrative. Schreiner's novel also comes decades before the chosen form of the Afrikaans novel in the next century: the farm novel, or *plaasroman*:

From 1920-1940, the Afrikaans novel concerned itself almost exclusively with the farm and platteland (rural) society with the Afrikaner's painful transition from farmer to townsman.  
(Coetzee, 1988: 63)

The palpable 'city' novel in the period between 1883 and 1930 does not emerge quite as strongly as the *plaasroman*, suggesting that the backbone of white South African writing located itself where its writers located themselves: in the country rather than the city. Loren Kruger writes:

In an ironic reversal of the classic modern paradigm where the city represents progress and the agency of citizens against the 'idiocy of rural life', the African city, especially Johannesburg, came in the apartheid era to signify barbarism for white South Africans, the very group that saw itself as the vanguard of modernity in South Africa. Fearful of the hybrid urbanity of the 'city native'... Afrikaner Nationalists and their English-speaking fellow-travellers in the 1950s proposed a counter-civitas, a perverse modernity defined not by urban civility but by isolation in the country... (1997: 565)

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<sup>69</sup> See Stevenson (1992), p. 18-22

<sup>70</sup> See Merrington (2003), p. 44

In the above quote, Kruger emphasises the exclusion of black South Africans—their culture, welfare and living space— in twentieth century nationalist Afrikaner thinking. Avoiding the city could, in this theory, be seen as a way of avoiding the difficulty of imagining a shared South African nation. In the country, until the early nineteenth century, slavery was one form of ensuring financial security by the white, elite landowning classes. In the quote, Kruger refers to the apartheid era of South Africa, yet these separatist ideologies were clearly in existence long before they were officially implemented in 1948. A basic understanding of South African history shows that, from Dutch settlement to Afrikaner nationalist governance, there was an uneven balance between white and black human rights in the country. South Africa’s history before 1994 was based on the negation or exclusion of black or “non-white” South Africans. The lengths many would go to in order to preserve an exclusive white nationhood were evident a century before apartheid when the emancipation of slaves in the 1830s had a direct bearing on the movement of Dutch/Afrikaner farmers out of the Cape Colony in the Great Trek. White Utopia could not include sharing with the “other”. Links with the land were forged in this utopian vision, especially because many of the Voortrekkers saw themselves as God’s chosen people, and the land they discovered journeying to the interior of the country was their Canaan, their promised land. The bond between farmer and land took on an intimate character:

... the farmer has both rights and obligations. However absolute his ownership, he has duties to the land, to his heirs and even to the ecology of the farm—that is, to the farm as part of nature. He is, in the language of myth, forbidden to rape the land. Instead he must husband it, giving it a devoted attention that will bring it to bear manyfold, yet keep it fertile for succeeding generations... in the Old World model the farm is naturalized by being integrated with the land, and in turn historicizes the land by making the land a page on which the generations write their story. (Coetzee, 1988: 66)

With increased modernity, or movement from the country to the city on the part of poor Afrikaners in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, a “divine pact” was forged “between Afrikaners and the land”, casting Afrikaners “as the *natural*, if not original inhabitants, dispossessed by English capital, erasing the history of Dutch and later Afrikaner expropriation of African farmers as well as their ongoing urbanization and dwelling on and in

a place and time defined both by eternal mythic presence and by the teleology of what might be called the *premodern postcolonial*" (Kruger, 1997: 569). Kruger's concept of a "pre-modern postcolonial" is both original and apt for a probing reading of South African modernity and the modernism that emerged in response to it. In this model, a nation after Western colonisation invents an idea of the pastoral as home, a place before an invasion of the "new" and that then becomes their template for the future. Yet, it is an awkward formation, exhibiting contradictory displays of both the old and the new:

In the colonial agon between civilization and barbarism, Empire and Africa, modernity and backwardness, Afrikaners appeared to take up both positions. (1997: 569)

In the nineteenth century, the Voortrekker rhetoric of journeying to the promised land evolved into the isolationist policies of the Republican governments founded by the Voortrekkers; in both cases, the antagonist, the bully, was the colonial government, the eternal agitator of the Dutch/Afrikaner, but there was also the uneasiness brought about by the presence of the "non-white" other, no longer bound to slavery and more of a threat to the Dutch/Afrikaner who only saw this other as fit for servitude. The defence of this promised land of the northern republic (and the gold therein) then became an important motivation for the South African War (Nasson, 2010: 58), where once again the Boer was seen as standing up to the imperial bully. In the post-war years, the victimhood transferred itself to the language of the Afrikaner, which in reality was more under threat from its Dutch base than it was from English<sup>71</sup>. Nevertheless, the mantle of oppressed victim remained firmly held in place by those thinking of themselves as victims:

They [Afrikaners] claimed, as the descendants of white settlers, to represent the vanguard of European manifest destiny, while at the same time casting themselves in the role of the autochthonous, indeed *African*, victims of British imperialism. (Kruger: 1997: 569)

The importance of family was at the core of Afrikaner thinking, hence the popularity of the term *volk* in so many defensive discourses. White Afrikaners were ideally a united family

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<sup>71</sup> This will be discussed later in the thesis, when I examine the Afrikaner nationalist lobbying for the implementation of Afrikaans as South Africa's second official language in the 1910s and 1920s.



(although reality proved otherwise), and the same metaphor was applied to Empire: Britain's colonies were seen as "sister states" in the (eventual) Commonwealth (Merrington, 2003: 37). As mentioned earlier, the English idea of the pastoral as a mythic space of regeneration was not far different from the Afrikaner vision. In the English dream, the farm was something of a portal to an old England of a "sturdy peasantry with its own land rights, joined by a web of reciprocal duties to a similarly rooted local aristocracy" (Coetzee, 1988: 80)—and this older England which, Coetzee argues, may never have existed at all (1988: 80)! The English pastoral charge of the mid-to-late nineteenth century merely found a like-minded but not agreeable partner in the Afrikaner legacy into the twentieth century, with the Boer connection to the land simplified as the right to own the South African land. The Boer and his family fought against displacement and sharecropping, two disagreeable forms of bullying by the English, in their mind-set; in turn, they thought nothing of displacing black farmers at their convenience. The family metaphor, Kruger finds, lends itself to tribal drama in Afrikaans literature in the twentieth century, where the family "functions not only as a synecdoche for the nation but as its structuring principle" (1997: 572). In Afrikaans literature, the farm is a "kingdom ruled over by a benign patriarch, with, beneath him, a pyramid of contented children... and serfs" (Coetzee, 1988: 72). As the father once made vows to his wife, so the father-farmer has promises to keep to the soil, to bring it to bear him the future. In English, Pauline Smith played to a similar effect with her Valley descriptions, and Coetzee finds that:

...the mythic values that accumulate around the valley are those of the womb: closure and fruitfulness, and the hint of nostalgia suggest that Harmonie, at the centre of the Little Karoo, belongs to the past... (1988: 69)

With this imagined, forged past, the twentieth century Afrikaners moved forward on the emotional surge inspired by a belief in their own heroism, an identity built on struggle, in which "the family fathers pay for the farm in blood, sweat and tears, not in money" (1988: 65).

Kruger goes on to suggest the twentieth century Afrikaner as a new, less forgivable model of Goethe's *Faust*. Here, she employs Berman's idea of Faust as the first modern protagonist in literature by comparing Afrikaner claims to South African land through toil and struggle as the modern, South African equivalent of Faust's relentless drive to develop coastal land for



habitation (Berman, 1988: 65). To borrow Kruger's term, Faust's vision is "seductive" because it promotes a community that could be developed along structured lines, and those applying the structure could as easily achieve despotism through it. Faust goes mad and orders the murder of those standing in the way of his plans, and for all his beliefs in helping people with settlement, his determination sees him make unreasonable demands of his labourers. Crudely so, the practises of white South Africans from both English and Afrikaner sections in their "development" of the country made pre-apartheid South Africa almost as untenable for their black or "non-white" countrymen as the apartheid era did. The "white man's war"<sup>72</sup> that was the South African War saw both sides abstract "non-whites" to negative supporting roles, and the outcome of the war saw little other than a betrayal of the "non-white" support both white sections had received (Omer-Cooper, 1994: 118). The story of *Faust* has, for Berman, been embedded in the modern nationalist narratives of many countries, and the South African example does not stray very far from the original.

In *The Story of an African Farm*, much of the twentieth century Afrikaner discourse was satirically presaged by Schreiner's character of Tant Sannie, the preposterous owner of a farm that seems to yield nothing, yet she prospers. The caustic world the novel presents to characters like Waldo is indifferent, unaffected and absurd, the very elements at the base of so many early-to-mid twentieth century narratives, from *Heart of Darkness* to *Waiting for Godot* (1952). An argument could be made for *The Story of an African Farm* being South Africa's forerunner to modernist experimentation along the lines of what James was already doing at the time in England with subjectivity and consciousness<sup>73</sup>, and what Conrad and Ford would yet approach at the turn of the century. To this novel, one can attach a sense of what Stevenson (1992: 77) describes as an extension of Romanticism, where the (early) modernism features as "utopian compensation, a revolt against reification". Stevenson identifies that early forms of modernist literature still showed Romantic influences, but that there was tension between Romanticism and modernism, a tension of old and new that often showed familiar worlds becoming alien<sup>74</sup>. Schreiner's novel gestures towards this in its early stages but steers towards the anti-pastoral and anti-Romantic at the same time, giving rise to a "new hostility" (1992:80) evident later in Woolf's *To The Lighthouse*, in which the changing

<sup>72</sup> Giliomee discusses an agreement between the warring parties that forbade "non-whites" from taking up arms for either side; see Giliomee (2003a), p. 258

<sup>73</sup> Stevenson (1992), p. 19

<sup>74</sup> Berman identifies Baudelaire as an early modernist still showing the influence of Romanticism; see Berman (1988), p. 136-139

landscape and unforgiving sea (1992: 79) are reminiscent of Schreiner's arid Karoo land and harsh skies. The *premodern* even makes an appearance in *The Story of an African Farm* when Waldo curiously studies the rock paintings of extinct Bushmen, wiped out by violent modernity. However, in the novel, the African farm setting's vastness still introduces the notion of a crushing time, of time deforming the characters from an early age. A suggestion for *The Story of an African Farm*'s warranting the title of "early modernist text" is made more interesting by its pre-war publication, as it emerged sixteen years before the South African War. Western modernism in literature is famously linked to post-World War I writing, after war has shaped a national mood or psyche, yet, according to Naremore, "it was fully established in New York, Chicago and the major European capitals by 1914, slightly before WWI shattered the confidence of the previous century's established institutions" (Naremore, 1998: 42). Schreiner's novel, like certain examples of Western modernist literature (for instance, James' *The Ambassadors*, published in 1903), is an example of an early modernist text written before a war, before a rupture in society occurred. Like many examples of modernist art, *The Story of an African Farm* left an influence that would be absorbed in later years, but some of the *plaasromans* of the twentieth century lose the critical edge and play into the desires of mass culture<sup>75</sup>.

Locally, Schreiner's relentless setting would be referenced but hardly matched in the 1920s by Pauline Smith, who nevertheless finds a use for the emptiness of the rugged South African terrain by playing it positively into the national white myth. In her *Little Karoo* stories, the setting is the Harmonie farm homestead in the Aangenaam Valley of the Little Karoo. Coetzee (1988: 69) sees this valley as a kind of Eden, and he examines how Smith's communities see their valley: "Harmonie is not in South Africa but in the Little Karoo; not in the Little Karoo but in the Aangenaam Valley." Kruger goes on to argue that "the juxtaposition of this wilderness and the confines of the homestead intensifies the sense of the latter as an environment in which space and time are contained by the bonds and bounds of kinship and in which the modern individual—free, self-conscious and capable of onward movement—is reined in by the timelessness of the tribe" (1997: 572). In Plomer's *Turbott Wolfe* the protagonist, the disillusioned Englishman, Wolfe, comes across such native people,

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<sup>75</sup> Later in this thesis I will explore Leipoldt's own aversion to substandard and sentimental literature in Afrikaans aimed at the masses in South Africa, as expressed by Mabuis in *The Mask* and by Leipoldt in his newspaper articles of the 1920s.

unable to move on because of the bounds of kinship keeping them in the Zululand setting<sup>76</sup>. The stories in South African modernist literature hardly ever need to make use of the city apart from positing the city as the negative binary, the necessary evil other to the goodness, but also the alienation, of the rural life. In this formulation, the city seduces the poor, jobless country bumpkin, but by the end the bumpkin sees the light and returns to run the farm. The story of South African modernity, outside of Johannesburg and the Witwatersrand, takes place in the country. From the farm fortress, Afrikaners designated themselves the “self-described guardians of the Western civilization in Africa, favoured a culture of nostalgia that was at once postcolonial, in its anti-British moment, and *premodern*, in its controlling fiction of autochthony and rural belonging in defiance of the facts of conquest and displacement” (Kruger, 1997: 566). The modern South Africa was defined by an anti-modern policy of separation in which English-speaking white South Africans were partially guilty for their compliance<sup>77</sup>. A downscaled version of western modernism played out in South Africa: if Western modernism was a “dialectic between Europe and America (or between vanguard art and mass culture)” (Naremore, 1998: 42), South African modernism was a conflict between associating polarities of an imagined “black” barbarism in the cities and agents of European civilisation in the country against an appropriation of European ideas to criticise these “localised” guardians of European civilisation. To illustrate and simplify this point: the English looked down on the Boers in the same way as the Boers looked down on “non-whites” (Coetzee, 1988: 3), and both white sections looked down on the “non-white” other. The corrective criticism applied to such a state of affairs is something closer to an idea of a South African literary modernism. This modernism and its attendant stylistic departures needs to be extracted from the modernity that births it, because it is the priority of the modernism, in my opinion, to comment on its own modernity. It is here where I hope to make an argument for C. Louis Leipoldt as a South African modernist, albeit a reluctant one.

In his discussion of African modernism, Hassan mentions the conflicting relationship between African art and European modernity, and discusses the rise of national consciousness and nation building:

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<sup>76</sup> Zululand is never mentioned by name, but Geoffrey Haresnape contends that it is most likely the setting of the novel, “thinly-veiled”; see Haresnape (1992), ‘William Plomer’, p. 114

<sup>77</sup> Kruger cites Guy Butler’s award-winning 1952 play, *The Dam*, as a willing English-language concession to the Afrikaner ideology; see Kruger (1997), p. 571

It is in this context that one should critically approach the combined roles played by European and Western patronage and intervention, European expatriates, colonial administrators, liberal colonial educators and missionaries whose various reasons and motivations have contributed to the rise of the modern art movement in Africa. (2010: 460)

European expatriates, colonial administrators and missionaries constitute some of the most important characters of the *Valley* trilogy. In mentioning this, I aim to illustrate that, although African modernist writers “have been weary of re-enslaving themselves to a kind of cultural neo-colonialism, to non-African concepts and ideals whose relevance to their situations are questionable” (Woods, 2005: 127), the South African modernism found in the *Valley* trilogy is highly receptive to European modernity and promotes it regularly. There is a dramatised clash between modernity and tradition throughout the trilogy, but ‘tradition’ is linked to nineteenth century European ideals of enlightenment, to which the tolerant characters subscribe, while ‘modernity’ refers to the *pre-modern* postcolonial Afrikaner nationalism. In this, the ‘modern’ is primitive and ‘tradition’ is more modern and progressive, yet their chronologies are contradictory.

According to Woods:

Modernism acted as a mirror held up to colonialism, and African writers saw reflected a style that addressed itself to the fragmented, alienated and disjointed consciousness of the colonized subject in Africa. Whereas European artists looked to Africa for borrowings to revitalize what was perceived to be a flagging and insipid Western aesthetic, African writers borrowed from European modernism for the purposes of promoting a radical politics of counter-colonialism. (2005: 128)

In the *Valley* trilogy, there is no counter-colonialism at work, but rather a counter-nationalism. Arguably, because he was a white South African with a broad immersion in European arts and culture, Leipoldt’s modernism readily aligned itself to nineteenth century Europe and showed the influence over two-thirds of the *Valley* trilogy. Only in *The Mask* would the mawkishness and nostalgic modernism of *Gallows Gecko* and *Stormwrack* give way to representations of modern alienation and character disjointedness that was more

typical of twentieth century high modernism in the West. To understand Leipoldt's modernism is to trace his literary immersion in and awareness of European literature, from which he borrowed extensively in writing the trilogy, while also remembering his status as a pioneer of Afrikaans literature. The next section seeks to understand the form and motivation of Leipoldt's unique, and complex, modernist sensibility, along with what Stephen Gray (2000b: 7) calls Leipoldt's "internationalism in a land of competing nationalisms".

### ***Leipoldt's early modernism***

The argument for Leipoldt as a colonial modernist, one as unlikely as Kipling and as reluctant as D.H. Lawrence will find the year 1900 as an important marker in his writing career, and rests on a few "intersecting" factors. Firstly, his journalism during the South African War places him in the moment of rupture, and some of his correspondence to European newspapers underscores his chronicling of events that shifted South Africa out of its colonial nineteenth century and into a period as an emerging "split" nation on a larger scale as the two Boer republics settled in the nineteenth century would develop into the segregationist government of 1948. Much of this journalism fit under the umbrella of national consciousness which, however debatable this point may be, spoke more to the Boer side of the war. This I will examine in the chapter on *Stormwrack*.

Leipoldt's brief forays into poetry and fictional prose between 1900 and 1904 suggest his awareness of the disillusionment that came with modernity. His English poem, *The Executions in the Cape Colony: A Fragment*,<sup>78</sup> briefly examines the spirit of despair and confusion of the Cape colonial at England's part in the war and this resurfaces as a fuller study in *Stormwrack*. His Dutch short story, *De Rebel*, examines the disillusionment of a Cape Dutch colonial after being ill-treated by the government he had been loyal to. This would also resurface in *Stormwrack* and had been revisited, more famously, in his poem *Oom Gert Vertel*. More intriguing is his reworking of *De Rebel* in English in 1904, when he was resident in London. The same story of a loyal Cape Dutch colonial rebelling against the English received a more ambitious treatment in *The Rebel* with a more complex

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<sup>78</sup> This very short poem, published in 1901, seems to me imbued with a bitterness that resonates with Esty's claims of colonial literature of this period pointing the way to later literary articulations of breaking from the past. The nihilistic overtones in the poem speak strongly to the confusion and sense of chaos that sometimes accompanies the break from tradition in modernist literature—in this case the break from a Cape Afrikaner tradition of community and unity. Leipoldt would revisit this theme in his debut poetry collection in 1911. Also, Gikandi mentions that in African literature "the idiom of the modern often camouflages itself in its opposite trope, what has come to be known as tradition." See Gikandi (2007), p. 3

psychological study that included brief passages of stream-of-consciousness technique<sup>79</sup>, a heightened sense of disillusionment and a decidedly anti-progressive thematic structure even as he employed familiar nineteenth century genre devices in the Gothic overtones, Victorian melodrama and allegory.

The period 1902-1911 is also of interest because Leipoldt found himself, like the more famous modernists Joyce, Eliot and Pound in the European climate of developing modernism. His *flâneur*-like explorations of the cities of modernism (London, Prague, Berlin, Paris, Moscow and Warsaw) saw him as part of the artistic presence of writers from colonised or previously colonised territories moving through the metropolises of the West. A reappraisal of global modernism during the early twentieth century along the lines Friedman (and Edward Said) proposes would then have to consider such instances of “overlap” (Hassan, 2010: 452). Leipoldt’s travel writing that documents this period provides interesting information about how he perceived and imagined Europe. The poem *Vrede Aand* (Peace Night) in his debut collection is an example of a modern form of poetry in Afrikaans due to the shifting focus of the speaker that ultimately draws him/her out as the real subject of the poem. The South African speaker, apparently situated in London, responds to the news of the South African War ending and peace being declared, amidst celebrations in the city around him. Kromhout (1954: 82) finds in this poem the most dithyrambic monologue yet, at the time, in Afrikaans poetry: the speaker moves from passionate cries to mourning, rhapsodizing about nature but then stating confusion at the God supposedly controlling nature, and praising women for their part in the South African War but also lamenting that they will suffer most afterwards because of memory (1954: 83). The poem offers an emotionally turbulent human voice succumbing to a modern world he/she fails to understand. The presence of the disappointed South African ex-patriots in London at the announcement of the news of the termination of the South African War in 1902 is given authenticity due to Leipoldt’s own presence in London at that time. Similarly, he was a witness to (and a critic of) the sympathetic Irish nationalists in London who championed the Boer cause, a sometimes-overlooked example<sup>80</sup> of cooperation and connection between anti-colonial, nationalist and modernist groups within the British empire.

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<sup>79</sup> My thanks to Hein Viljoen for pointing this out.

<sup>80</sup> In 2005 a full study of these connections, both political and textual, appeared in Elleke Boehmer’s *Empire, The National, and the Postcolonial*.

Leipoldt's European city experience informed the poem *Amsterdam*, also in his debut collection. Here, the emphasis is both on perplexing reflections on nationhood and exile by the speaker while also a melancholic meditation on the contrast between an imagined, idyllic *premodern* and an alienating modernity. The premodern is to be found in his/her recollections of his/her native country with an emphasis on uncorrupted natural scenery but, tellingly, the distinction between imagination and accuracy is unclear, a vision of the idyllic the speaker may never have experienced. The focus on the modern can be seen in the crushing presence of Amsterdam itself, its history connected to its role in an earlier colonisation of the speaker's native country and its present as the site of his/her anguish and isolation. The city was also where other Afrikaans exiles such as the poet Totius and the linguist J.J. Smit were housed during the time Leipoldt was in Europe.

The spectre of modern Europe hung over Leipoldt's writing into the 1920s and 1930s, clearly in his journalism where he often divagated on Europe's potential as a bastion for South African cultural development and also where he offered opinions on European literature. In his fiction, popular Western forms, mostly rooted in the proto-modernist nineteenth century literature, could be found in his first Afrikaans detective novel, *Die Moord op Muisenberg* and his overtly psychological character study *Die Donker Huis*, with its Freudian overtones its most compelling feature. I return to these ideas in the final chapter, where I will discuss their impact on the *Valley* trilogy.



### CHAPTER 3: LEIPOLDT AS A RELUCTANT MODERNIST

#### *The case for Leipoldt as a South African modernist*

Leipoldt's writing career shows his engagements with South African modernity, as well as his unfailing ability to provide criticism of every epoch he discusses. Perhaps his journalism, apparently his preferred vocation, best suggests the role Leipoldt wished to adopt: that of the ever-alert cultural critic. His career as a journalist may be divided into three components that, in their chronology in the timeline of his life, provide a running commentary on crucial events and shed light on how Leipoldt's life story could itself be read as something of a South African modernist narrative.

The ability to blend scientific research with strong, creative personal opinion in both his literary and documentary output characterises much of Leipoldt's writing: his didacticism is the strongest thread running through his published work, and to that extent, his journalism, and the confidence he felt in it lay behind much of his fiction. For someone who could not claim a regular schooling background and without a higher education outside of his medical studies, Leipoldt was remarkably well researched in literature and culture. The three periods of his career as a journalist can be divided into his late teenage years, his time as a medical student in London and his more mature period as a respected, senior writer in South Africa. While he was capable of factual reporting and on-the-spot commentary, Leipoldt's real skill was in acting as a columnist: a regular, opinionated oracle figure who could usually support his sometimes outrageous provocations with research, although this was not always the case. At a time, in the 1910s and 1920s, when a mostly white, Afrikaner readership was in need of an "education", Leipoldt appointed himself as a wise but sometimes rascally "uncle" figure, the voice a nation could turn to without always being aware that the voice was relying on tricks of rhetoric to break down stubborn public beliefs about nationhood and privilege. He was given this position to help stimulate the cultural growth of the Afrikaans language but immediately began to include politics of his own, politics of a broader sort that questioned, more than anything else, this fanatical push for developing the language. He was one of the moderates who would not renege on a loyalty to the Dutch language that stood beside English throughout the nineteenth century in colonial South Africa.



However, few could argue against the authority of Leipoldt's voice: it was widely known that he was the first poet to find a consistent, emotional and morale-boosting creative outlet for Afrikaans, and that immediately conferred upon him the title of senior, a pioneer of the language's literary path – in fact, most likely much to his chagrin, a Voortrekker of the literacy of the language, given the over-abundant verve (stimulated chiefly by Gustav Preller) a hungry public had for labelling any sort of Afrikaner pioneer a Voortrekker at the time<sup>81</sup>. Like another renowned but not necessarily venerated 'hack', J.B. Priestley of England, something of a contemporary, Leipoldt comfortably slotted into many writing roles because of the ease with which he could assume authority. Just as Priestley's experience as a soldier in World War I aided his public profile to the point where his dabbling in different mediums of writing was both excused and rewarded (and during World War II his was a popular voice on the radio, invoking, Churchill-like, patriotism and bravado)<sup>82</sup>, Leipoldt's background as a first-hand witness to the South African War placed him in the echelon of an esteemed veteran for an Afrikaner public in need of heroes<sup>83</sup>. This Afrikaner populace was in some ways the forerunner to the confused, shattered Western publics in the wake of World War I, similarly searching for the kind of heroism writers like Priestley advocated – but to that end, and different to Priestley, Leipoldt was then also something of a forerunner to the kind of Western modernist writer disillusioned by such claims to jingoistic loyalty and heroism. And Leipoldt ought to have known: as a young journalist he skirted dangerously close to subscribing to that kind of blind loyalty himself. He was a witness to the South African War and had first-hand experiences of World War I, when he acted as Genl Louis Botha's doctor during the South West (Namibian) rebellion of 1914, seeing a fair amount of action himself<sup>84</sup>. Also, Leipoldt's reputation as a generous medical practitioner, a genuine man of the people, was well known (Kannemeyer, 1999: 494-501). His medical opinions were sometimes questioned by medical colleagues who knew when Leipoldt was being either outrageously incorrect or extremely informed (1999: 503-506, 517). Similarly, Leipoldt's unquestionable knowledge of food and wine only bolstered his journalistic profile, as those readers generally interested in the culinary arts received vast amounts of information, as well as history, from Leipoldt's regular

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<sup>81</sup> See Kromhout (1954) p. 65-66

<sup>82</sup> See Braine (1978), p. 17-26 and 105-6; Marr (2008), p. xxii and [www.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/7655113.stm](http://www.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/7655113.stm) (Priestley War Letters Published)

<sup>83</sup> See Kromhout (1954), p. 120

<sup>84</sup> See Kannemeyer (1999), p. 389: Leipoldt was recognized for "gallant and distinguished services in the field" in a citation signed by Winston Churchill, then "Secretary of State of War" – this is another curious similarity between Leipoldt and J.B. Priestley

columns<sup>85</sup>. In his own manner, which regularly alternated between impetuous and assertive to kindly liberal and almost parental<sup>86</sup>, Leipoldt the journalist was intent on providing a sound education for his readers. In all facets of his journalism, his goal of cultural re-development of Afrikaners, fully realised, ironically in the *Valley* trilogy's English-language fiction<sup>87</sup>, is apparent. When he wrote about matters of health, he simultaneously criticised unequal race policies<sup>88</sup>, prophesised biological degeneration in third generation white families (Merrington, 2003: 41) and called for miscegenation to occur<sup>89</sup>. When he wrote about food, he slammed Afrikaners for thinking they had a unique, indigenous food culture and instead suggested that authentic South African food ethos belonged to the "Cape Malays"<sup>90</sup>.

Most portentously, his critical writing about literature, specifically local literature, was the most constant sounding board he had for his views on the state of South African writing and, by extension, South African nationhood. Not even taking into account Leipoldt's writing about art, history and his botanical interests, these three facets of his journalism sweepingly summarise his authorial points of departure, his general, unrelenting arguments. In each facet, there is some kind of engagement with modernity and a criticism of it, which, in short, I believe to be Leipoldt's modernism at work, since he had to engage with the modernity, and use the tools of it (like the newspaper) to make his point. In the *Valley* trilogy, he upholds the past against the present when talking about the future but the awkward tension he shows, even as he prefers the past, is a modernist tension. The utopian vision he shares in these arguments is as flawed as that of any modernist vision of Utopia. For the most part, Leipoldt displayed an ability to write about the modernity he was experiencing and quite often, he seemed to be interrogating modernity. His war correspondences between 1900 and 1902 find him deeply immersed in his concerns about the South Africa War's impact on the present and the future, but in many of these correspondences his viewpoint seems to be sympathetic to the Boer side. A decade later, in his debut collection of poetry, *Oom Gert Vertel en Ander Gedigte*, he lamented the futility of war and its psychological scarring of the individual.

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<sup>85</sup> See Oppelt (2012), p.51-58

<sup>86</sup> See Viljoen (1953) p. 152-161

<sup>87</sup> Apart from seeking an international readership, another reason Leipoldt may have written the *Valley* trilogy in English was a weariness he noted, in his diary, of writing in Afrikaans; he claims to be "fed up with Afrikaans and Jaaps"; see Gray (2000b), pp. 8-9

<sup>88</sup> See Leipoldt (1980a), 'Afterthoughts'

<sup>89</sup> Ibid

<sup>90</sup> See Oppelt (2012)

Twenty years after that, in *Stormwrack*, he identifies the South African War as the moment that influenced unequal cultural development in the country. In deriving his strongest fictional writing from that war (*Stormwrack* and *Oom Gert Vertel en Ander Gedigte*), Leipoldt suggests what Naremore later calls the oft-overlooked idea of modernism and mass culture enjoying a close relationship. The South African War, as I will discuss later, was the subject matter for many Afrikaans literary works throughout the twentieth century and many of these works were intended to be popular and aid the nationalist project. The impetus for the Afrikaner Nationalist push of the twentieth century came from the South African War, leading to a kind of ‘culture industry’<sup>91</sup> that also drove Afrikaans literature *per se*<sup>92</sup>. Sometimes mass culture<sup>93</sup>, usually typified by American industry and consumerism, neatly disguised the artistic within the commercial. An example of this is the pulp crime fiction in which a bona fide modernist like Dashielle Hammet<sup>94</sup>, who aspired to Eliot-like stature, quietly operated. Hammet’s literature was usually backed by his real-life experience of his subject matter (the world of the detective). In his later journalism and in the *Valley* trilogy, Leipoldt regularly pointed to the relative youth of South Africa, its lack of a rich cultural history and the absence of a common enemy to unite against. Instead, he lamented that in the absence of a common enemy, the people of South Africa turn on themselves and the idea of a whole, united South Africa is split and fragmented, immediately more of a modernist concern. This sets Leipoldt against the core Afrikaner nationalist thinking of his day. The nationalists were actively trying to imagine an Afrikaner South African nation<sup>95</sup> while Leipoldt saw their project as an impossible task because there was no concept of unity between races. The South African War, in Leipoldt’s view, destroyed the idea of a unique South African identity along the lines the nationalists were proposing. With their aggressive lobbying in the 1920s and 1930s, the nationalists were being divisive because not all Afrikaners were nationalist-minded. In *Stormwrack*, Leipoldt shows the differences between

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<sup>91</sup> Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer proposed that popular culture saw a streamlining, or industrialisation of artistic or literary material into a capitalist scheme for mass society, creating a ‘low art’ of standardised cultural goods. See Adorno & Horkheimer (2002).

<sup>92</sup> Western modernism, as discussed earlier, was already established before World War I in 1914 in notable stylistic changes in literature, but post-World War I these breaks were more pronounced, more jarring and more evident.

<sup>93</sup> Mass culture, in North America, was opposed by male high modernists on the grounds of it being exclusively targeted for a feminine consumership in the form of glossy magazines, big, lavish Broadway productions and books-of-the-month; see Naremore (1998), p. 44

<sup>94</sup> see Naremore (1998), p.50-54

<sup>95</sup> I discuss this in relation to Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities* in a later chapter.

Cape Afrikaners and Republican Afrikaners, and he mostly identifies himself (and his South African Party) as closer to Cape Afrikaners, not nationalist republicans.

Leipoldt's yearning for an older, more organic world may be decidedly English if his *Gallows Gecko* vision is to be believed, but in its flaws, again, it makes us wonder how much Leipoldt himself really believed it and the question, then, perhaps points more to the author than the story, much like a modernist painting drew more attention to its canvas or frame than to the image depicted (Naremore, 1998: 41). The inconsistent narrator in the *Valley* trilogy is one point to investigate and ponder, but actually Leipoldt the journalist's writing already provides us with material to study, giving us both documented evidence of his relationship with history (and history-in-the-making) and creating a proposal that in his time, Leipoldt was a public intellectual<sup>96</sup>. In a cruel irony, Leipoldt's own attempt at having himself re-read as an English-speaking cultural critic was not much more of a success than the unpublished *Valley* trilogy. His 1937 memoir, *Bushveld Doctor* (more generally available since 1980), though later admired by Afrikaans writers like Uys Krige (Kannemeyer, 1999: 578) was not widely distributed in South Africa at the time and most of its copies, intended for international distribution, were destroyed in an early air raid of London during World War II (1999: 578).

To return to the three important periods of his journalism, it could also be argued that Leipoldt's own growing maturity can be traced through them, so that interested researchers gain a foothold of the events (and opinions thereof) that would culminate in the *Valley* trilogy. There is, I argue, an upward curve in Leipoldt's journalism as regards his concerns for South Africa as a developing country. In his early journalism, his thoughts concerning the kind of South Africa he wished to see were inconclusive, almost befitting the period itself, which was that of the South African War. By the late 1920s, his journalism was more prone to making assessments of the ideas of nationhood, based on his experiences of the Union of South Africa, established in 1910, and the emergence of Afrikaner nationalism. This shaping of Leipoldt the person is not merely interesting biographical data. For the purposes of investigating modernist elements in his work, Leipoldt's journalism holds almost as many clues as his fiction.

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<sup>96</sup> 'Public intellectual', which existed in an earlier, nineteenth century definition as "man of letters" in Great Britain, is a common term for an intellectual engaged in public rather than (or as well as) academic or other professional discourse. This kind of engagement regularly takes in social issues; see Furedi (2004), p.32

The first phase of Leipoldt's career as a journalist began in 1898, when he was yet to turn 18<sup>97</sup>. Within a year, and shortly before the start of the South African War, Leipoldt had secured a position from which he would eventually act as an editor<sup>98</sup> and war correspondent for overseas publications<sup>99</sup>. While Leipoldt's activities as a war correspondent during the South African War are discussed later in this project in the chapter on *Stormwrack*, we immediately note the very different Leipoldt we encounter in his war-time writing. This is apparent in his Dutch war letters which were not made publicly available until 2002, a century after he wrote them. His Afrikaans poetry and prose, his (later) Afrikaans journalism and even the *Valley* trilogy had all been published by 2002. The young Leipoldt found in the war correspondence to Amsterdam in 1900 and 1901 is more like the hot-headed Santa in *The Mask*: brash, arrogant, obviously very intelligent and Republican-minded. The Leipoldt found in these letters is practically consumed by the zeal of modernity, the experiencing of a shift brought about by the war, and suitably contradictorily he sides with the Boers, fighting to preserve their *pre-modern*, their pastoral paradise as well as their modern enterprise, the Rand gold mines. They fight with the most advanced and effective Mausers from Germany while harnessing the land as an ally, almost like a South African Faust in that they are willing to kill for their land. The young Leipoldt, like Santa, is *caught up* although, unlike Santa, he does have the excuse that he had not yet left South Africa and experienced any other country: one of the common traits of writers described as modernist is their time spent in other countries, either in exile or self-exile (Bradbury, 1991: 101-102). Leipoldt's time away from the land of his birth then provides the setting for the next phase of his journalism, in which his versatility allows him to move between travel writing, literary criticism and medical reportage.

### ***Leipoldt in Europe, 1902—1913***

In *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said notes that an exploration of the twentieth-century history and sociology of the Western metropolis reveals the strong presence of students, writers, and artists from previously colonized territories, including Africa, and in Paris, London, Rome, and other capitals. Their intellectual production is essential to any reconsideration of what constitutes global modernity as it

<sup>97</sup> See Kannmeyer (1999), p.106-108

<sup>98</sup> Kannmeyer (1999), p.135

<sup>99</sup> Kannmeyer (1999), p.114-118

overlaps with that of their contemporary European counterparts, and their intellectual and cultural production can in no way be analysed as merely reactive assertions of spate native or colonized subjectivity. (Hassan, 2010: 452)

From 1902, before the end of the South African War, Leipoldt was settled in the “enemy territory” of England, ironic given the anti-English tone of some of his earlier war letters. Basing himself in London but in due course exploring much of Europe, Leipoldt’s letters to his English benefactor Dr Bolus, in South Africa, signpost, from the very beginning, a different tone when he discusses the war at home: not so much a case of shifting allegiance, as that is questionable<sup>100</sup>, but perhaps an indication of the influence of his new surroundings. And as happenstance would have it, Leipoldt was located in Europe at the very time the currents of modernism spread through the continent’s cities (Bullock, 1991: 57-59). London, for instance, “is the obvious centre of English-language Modernist activity and between 1890 and 1920 it sustained and generated a vital sequence of experimental movements and phases” (Bradbury, 1991: 172). In this environment, Leipoldt could briefly be counted with the kind of writer associated with modernism:

Thus frequently it is emigration or exile that makes  
for membership of the modern country of the arts, and  
the writer becomes a member of a wandering,  
culturally inquisitive group... (Bradbury, 1991: 101-102)

Leipoldt’s Afrikaans contemporaries were also located in Europe at this time<sup>101</sup>. More interestingly, Leipoldt became part of the country that had been at war with his own, perhaps fitting the kind of unique description of the modern writer offered by Gertrude Stein:

Writers must have two countries—the one in which they  
belong and the one in which they live really—America is  
my country and Paris is my hometown. (Stein, quoted in  
Bradbury & McFarlane, 1991: 171)

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<sup>100</sup> See Kannemeyer (1999), p. 134

<sup>101</sup> The poets Totius and Celliers, as well as the linguist J.J. Smit were among many Afrikaans writers either living or studying in the Netherlands before the South African Union in 1910, where they established followings; see Kannemeyer (1999), p. 318.

Yet, for all the metropolitan art London may have inspired, it remains the less vibrant, less obvious of the modernist cities, “one with no real artistic community, no true centres, no coteries, no cafes, a metropolis given to commerce and an insular middle-class lifestyle either indifferent or implacably hostile to the new arts... Its image lives in Modernist writing itself...” (Bradbury, 1991: 172). Leipoldt’s correspondence goes some way to explaining his dislike of the city in contrast to his great admiration of more scenic European capitals like Prague, Paris and Berlin (Kannemeyer, 1999: 239-249). However, of greater importance to Leipoldt was his desire to return to South Africa. Modernists like Pound and Joyce were known for choosing to stay in their “adopted” countries, where they were housed usually in exile or self-imposed exile from their native countries. The “unusual” or reluctant modernist Leipoldt would turn out to be chose to return to his home country rather than adopt another.

Undeniably, however, Europe sufficiently mesmerised the young medical student, and for fleeting moments, he was again suitably caught up in it. In 1908 Leipoldt embarked on a study tour of Europe, recording his travels as he was instructed to provide reports on the cities he visited that were to be published in *The Hospital*, the medical journal for which he wrote. He also described his travels to his benefactor, Bolus, in South Africa. His 1908 letters to Bolus contain astute descriptions of the sights he takes in, starting with Berlin:

...in many ways interesting to a stranger, but it is a city of extremes. The Siegesallee is about the most awful perversity of art I have seen.... When you stand in front of the solidly simple marble figure of the man who ‘knew how to be silent in seven languages’ you are almost persuaded the Germans are the coming race... The picture galleries are fine enough, but the best pieces there...are almost French in execution, however much they may be Teutonic in conception...The buildings are very much like the statues, overdone. The new evangelical dome, Italian renaissance style, is supremely ugly as yet, looking shoddy and new... (Leipoldt, 1979: 111-113)

In *The Hospital*, his formal report reads favourably:

... of all German university towns, Berlin offers perhaps the most facilities for study for the graduate, especially for



the 'foreign graduate' who comes to Germany in search of 'special courses'. The population of the city is of the most varied kind, and medically Berlin taps the surrounding parts to a greater extent than is the case in London and Paris... (Quoted in Kannemeyer, 1999: 241)

In another letter to Bolus, Leipoldt identifies an emblem of modern experience, a feature of the late nineteenth century and a strange literary marker of modernity, in Warsaw and Moscow:

... very interesting—street life more so than in any city I have seen. The Paris fashion prevails of sitting in the cafés and of dignifying the cult of the Flâneur. The Russian seems to spend a third of his day at the café... young and old sit over their ice just as in Germany they sit over their beer... the café lounge stares in to the street and listens to the band, hardly ever opening his mouth for conventional purposes. The scene that goes before his eyes, ever varying and changing, is very interesting. A constant stream of people perambulate the pavements and I have never yet seen so many varieties of our race jostling one another as in the Moscow streets. You can imagine the picturesqueness of it all with dandy-like Frenchmen, bluff Germans, haggard Finns, fantastically looking Armenians, gaudy Croats, Tartars, and Herzegovinians, broad rim-hatted Thibetans, long-tailed Chinese... and amidst all, constantly, like a stream of yellow water flowing into the sea or a vein of mica shimmering in a stratum of variegated conglomerate, comes a line of military, gold, green, and silver uniforms, clanking spurs and clattering sabres. (Leipoldt, 1979: 113)

The cult of observation that Leipoldt identifies as *flânerie*<sup>102</sup>, may also apply to Leipoldt himself in the above quote. Because of his admiration for Baudelaire, Leipoldt may likely have gleaned the term from the French writer's essays. In fact, in some ways this very description Leipoldt offers above is typical of city modernity, and also reminds strongly of the opening of Poe's *The Man of the Crowd* in what it offers in terms of reading the city.

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<sup>102</sup> Benjamin would generate much academic momentum with his study of the *flâneur* as a product of modern life, building on the earlier concept appropriated by Baudelaire. George Simmel elaborated the idea that the *flâneur* was emblematic of how modern cities transformed and shaped human beings; see Parkhurst-Ferguson (1994), p. 80-115.



However, the connection to Baudelaire is more relevant, and in the next section I will pay closer attention to that association.

*Leipoldt's literary criticism and his employment of popular nineteenth century forms of literature*

In pointing to Leipoldt's seeming preference for nineteenth century modes of thought on modernity, his interest in Baudelaire in a few of his literary articles in the 1920s and 1930s, as well as his comments on modern European literature, is important to consider. In four such pieces, he freely applies the description "modern" to many examples of European poetry and prose works without elaborating on what he considers to be "modern". What is clear is that he is dismissive of twentieth century authors we associate with modernism such as Joyce and Lawrence (Leipoldt, 1990: 66) and is more interested in the processes involved in establishing modern literature.

A brief example of Leipoldt's affinity for Baudelaire may be found in *Stormwrack*. The nineteenth century fascination with an ever-notable speed of life<sup>103</sup> through its touchstone terms progress and growth does influence the final quarter of *Stormwrack*, when more action occurs in the novel after the war finally reaches the District. Modernity is literally on show as the war machine starts marching through the Village shortly after the death of Queen Victoria. In fact, modernity, embodied by soldiers carrying their artillery, enters the Village almost overnight while the unsuspecting inhabitants are asleep (Leipoldt, 2001: 411). The following day, when Village youths and some older Villagers watch in amazement as troops in their full regalia continue marching into their now-pregnable time capsule, we are reminded of Baudelaire's essay, "The Painter of Modern Life" (1863), in which, as Berman states (1988:137), a colourful military regiment marching through Parisian streets was adored as being fashionable. This very kind of display Leipoldt had witnessed while travelling through Moscow in 1908, and described cheerfully in a letter to his benefactor before returning to the image and focussing on its ominous potential in *Stormwrack*. I mention it now as an example of Leipoldt's similarity to Baudelaire, which might not be incidental, as Leipoldt's fondness for nineteenth century literature in his journalism in the 1920s and 1930s shows.

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<sup>103</sup> Throughout Berman's book he turns to the idea that modern progress brought about a "speed" of change to the lifestyles of many in the Western world.

Regarding what was popularly conceived as the modern literature of the twentieth century up to the 1930s, Leipoldt was contemptuous. Not unlike many of the Western modernists who were themselves not regularly highly receptive of each other's work<sup>104</sup>, Leipoldt offered negative criticisms of the work of James Joyce and D.H. Lawrence in two of his pieces during the 1920s and the 1930s. In 'Die Taak Van Die Kritikus' (The Task of the Critic), written in 1935, Leipoldt lists authors not worthy of the praise they receive from 'cliques' largely devoted to them (Leipoldt, 1990: 66). Dating his list from 1910 to 1935, he mentions the "heiligverklaring" of Lawrence, "whose works only his fans can read with taste" and finds amusing the interest in Joyce's *Ulysses*, which he dismisses as a somewhat comical document of paranoia (1990: 66). In another piece, 'Paranoia in die Kuns' (Paranoia in Art), written in 1940, Leipoldt enlarges his criticism of Joyce by discussing *Ulysses* and *Finnegan's Wake*, and makes a fleeting mention of Lawrence as well:

'n Meer aanstootlike voorbeeld van letterkundige paranoia is die Ierse skrywer James Joyce. Sy veelbesproke boek *Ulysses* en sy latere werk *Finnegan's Wake*, is altwee "paranoïese dokumente" wat, ofskoon hulle weinige betekenis vir die letterkundige besit, die psigiater 'n sekere mate van belanstelling inboesem. Die gewone leser sal waarskynlik nie daarin slaag om een van hierdie boeke deur te lees nie. Die styl is so afstotend eentonig, die verhaal is so dun en onbeduidend en die skryftrant is so eienaardig dat hy die boek sal neerlê sonder om verder as die eerste hoofstuk te gaan... In werklikheid is dit niks anders as 'n openbaring van die skrywer se paranoia nie... Wat eintlik net hierop neerkom dat *Ulysses* by uitstek 'n "paranoïese dokument" is en as sodanig moet beoordeel word, nie as letterkundige produk nie, maar as 'n kenmerkende ontboeseming van 'n paranoïker wat deur sy verbigasie op ontkundiges die indruk maak van iemand wat wel deeglik iets te sê het en wat dit op 'n besondere, eienaardige en rapsodiese manier sê. Sulke paranoïese dokumente is welbekend aan psigiaters... By Joyce is die gereedskap 'n verspotte, deur homself gesmede, taalbredie wat so deurspek is met snaakse woordkombinasies dat die gewone leser baie min lus het om die boek deur te lees. By 'n paranoïker van die aard van Lawrence weer is dit 'n vervelende beklemtoning van gewaarwordinge uit die

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<sup>104</sup> See Stevenson (1992), p. 12

geslagslewe wat op die ou end 'n soortgelyke walging by die leser verwek. (1990: 83-84)

A more offensive example of literary paranoia is the Irish writer James Joyce. His much-discussed book *Ulysses* and his later work *Finnegan's Wake* are both "paranoid documents" which, though they possess little meaning for the *littérateur*, fills the psychiatrist with a certain amount of interest. The average reader would probably not succeed in reading one of these books through. The style is so repulsively monotonous, the tale so tenuous and trivial and the writing strain so strange that he will lay down the book without going further than the first chapter... In reality it is nothing other than a disclosure of the writer's paranoia... Which actually just amounts to *Ulysses* being a "paranoid document" by extension and that it should be judged accordingly, not as a literary product, but as a characteristic effusion of a paranoiac who through his verbosity makes the impression on the inexpert of someone who thoroughly does have something to say and who could say this in an extraordinary, idiosyncratic and rhapsodical way. Such paranoid documents are well known to psychiatrists... With Joyce the tools are aridiculous, self-forged, word salad which is so larded with bizarre word combinations that the average reader has very little appetite for reading the book through. With a paranoiac of the nature of Lawrence again it is a wearisome accentuation of perceptions of sexuality which at the very end rouses a similar revulsion in the reader.

Leipoldt, in the same piece, would go on to equate literary paranoia of the modern sort as little more than "showing off" (1990: 84). *Hamlet*, as well as Baudelaire's *Litannie de Satan* (which he contrasts with the French Dadaïsts of the 1930s), Leipoldt regards as older, superior examples of texts featuring a controlled paranoia that is an element in their fabric, but not an out-of-control, shaping factor (1990: 85). A sense of mistrust of modern literature is evident in these 1930s articles.

Joseph Conrad is singled out by Leipoldt as more deserving of praise but he regrets that Conrad is outdated because his works are not inconsistent enough to suit the modern fashion, that they are too readable and interesting (1990: 66). The kind of proto-modernism offered by Conrad, as I mentioned earlier, was more suited to Leipoldt's own inclinations because it stemmed from the nineteenth century but also anticipated twentieth century developments in

literature. Leipoldt's preference for Conrad over Joyce and Lawrence in 'Die Taak van die Kritikus' furthers my argument that Leipoldt is more inclined to the turn-of-the-century literature of Conrad and James, especially because Leipoldt's earliest fiction comes from the same period<sup>105</sup>.

In a 1906 letter to his benefactor, Dr Bolus<sup>106</sup>, as well as a critical piece written in 1907<sup>107</sup>, he defends his admiration for Eduard Douwes Dekker (also known as Multatuli), citing him as the first exponent of modern Dutch literature with his book, *Max Havelaar*, written in 1860<sup>108</sup>. In a 1929 piece, he cites Saint-Beuve's criticism as having been fundamental to the development of modern French literature (1990: 46) and, in another piece written in 1926 and focused on horror fiction, he quotes a French critic praising the work of German writer Hans Heinz Ewers – another writer we could possibly describe as a proto-modernist in the James and Conrad vein – for laying a groundwork of Gothic horror from which more modern authors could draw. He ends that particular piece by urging anyone with an interest in the modern horror story to view James and Ewers as masters (1990: 30) and speculates that in the half-century leading up to the 1920s, the ghost story was arguably the most popular form of fiction in Europe, an observation that draws on the late nineteenth century's equal fascination with science and ratiocination as well as "magic" or enchantment<sup>109</sup>. It should not escape our attention that Leipoldt's concentration on European literature in these pieces regularly orbits the centres that most modernist studies tend towards: France, Germany, England and America, and his ability to read French and German would have assisted his absorbing

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<sup>105</sup> In 1900, concurrent with his war journalism, Leipoldt wrote a fictional sketch called *De Rebel* (allegedly the first published Dutch story written by a South African) as an outcry against martial law. His first published poem, *The Executions in the Cape Colony: A Fragment*, appeared in 1901 and in 1904, for the *Westminster Review*, he reworked *De Rebel* as *The Rebel*, a more complex take on Cape Afrikaner rebellion during the South African War that looks ahead to *Oom Gert Vertel en Ander Gedigte* and *Stormwrack*; see Oppelt (2007), p.42-45

<sup>106</sup> See Leipoldt (1979), p.40.

<sup>107</sup> See Gray (2000b), p. 11

<sup>108</sup> In a later piece, written in 1947, shortly before he died, Leipoldt lamented that Dekker's work was hardly known any more and reiterated that *Max Havelaar* was one of the books that inspired him most; see Leipoldt, (1990), p. 101

<sup>109</sup> In "Clap If You Believe in Sherlock Holmes: Mass Culture and the Re-Enchantment of Modernity", Michael Saler finds that, between 1890 and 1940 there were reconciliations between rational and secular tenets of modernity with enchantment in certain forms of literature and he looks at Arthur Conan Doyle's *Sherlock Holmes* stories as examples. 'Enchantment', in this context, refers to adult readers applying 'ironic imagination' when reading Holmes stories, fully aware of the scientific explanations and resolutions to mysteries at the end of such stories, but also willing to be held by notions of magic and the fantastic implied by the mysteries of the stories before scientific ratiocination prevails; see Saler (2003). A more recent example of such 'enchantment' occurs in the film *Sherlock Holmes* (2009)

foreign texts. He is especially interested in French literature. In the same piece on horror fiction he praises the influence of Poe on French horror fiction and also acknowledges Baudelaire as one of Poe's greatest admirers (1990: 23). In the 1929 piece in which he mentions Saint-Beuve, he also urges South African academics to translate important European works into Afrikaans, and suggests that the example set by France, in this regard, be applied (1990: 50); he also includes the neglect of French literature in his complaints against the South African school curriculum in the 1920s (1990: 46). Discussing other contemporary trends in a piece written in 1935, devoted to explaining the tasks of the literary critic, Leipoldt finds French poetry steeped in Dadaïsm and sees its immediate impact in England and America, in doing so unintentionally (or disinterestedly) getting at some of the crucial beliefs of modernism:

Die... soort kritiek is om in die werk meer te lees, meer te vermoed, as wat daarin werklik steek. Hoe gebrekkiger dit aan tegniek is, hoe manker dit loop weens 'n verwaarlosing van logika en samehang, des te mooier en grootser is dit vir hierdie kritiek. Uitstekende voorbeelde hiervan vind ons in die nuwere Franse kritiek van die Dadaïste-skool van digters, waarvan daar baie navolgers bestaan in die modern Engelse en Amerikaanse skrywers, wat kakofoniese klanke verkies bo ritme en assonans. (1990: 68)

This... kind of criticism is to read more into the work, to presume more, than what is truly present. The more lacking it is in technique, the more crippled its course due to a neglect of logic and coherence, the more beautiful and great it is for his criticism. Outstanding examples of this are to be found in the newer French criticism of the Dadaist school of poets, of which there exist many followers amongst the modern English and American writers, who prefer cacophonic sounds to rhythm and assonance.

This observation immediately follows, in the same piece, Leipoldt's motivation for Baudelaire's poem, *Une Charogne* to be considered an ironically "pure" form of poetry in spite of its alleged decadence and shock value (Blum, 1955: 106-7). In the poem, the speaker and his partner encounter, on a bright summer's day, a decaying corpse, moving the speaker

to ruminate on mortality and fleeting instances of beauty in life and death. Leipoldt's defence of the poem immediately finds its Romantic prerogative:

Om hierdie onderwerp as iets digterliks en skoons te beskou is om van die leser te vra om sy verbeelding so ver te rek dat die meeste lesers eenvoudig sal weier om die nodige inspanne daartoe te gebruik. Hulle sal eenvoudig sê: 'Die gedig is 'n onbetaamlike verkragting van poësie wat nie die moeite loon van ontleed te word nie. Hoe eerder ons dit vergeet, des te beter.' En tog, nadere studie van daardie gedig bewys dat dit, afgesien van sy waarde as 'n louter kunsproduk—as 'n meesterstuk van ritme en assosiasie van gevoelswaardes met woorde wat aan daardie waardes hul volle krag en volmaaktheid verleen—iets is wat in die leser baie meer kan opwek as net maar die beeld van 'n aanstootlike, ontbindende lyk, met alles wat daaraan toebehoor. (1990: 68)

To consider this subject as something poetic and fine is to ask the reader to stretch his imagination so far that most readers would simply refuse to exercise the necessary effort for it. They will simply say: 'This poem is an inappropriate rape of poetry that does not reward the effort of being analysed. The sooner we forget it, the better.' And yet, closer study of that poem proves that it, apart from its worth as a sheer product of art – as a masterpiece of rhythm and association of emotional values with words which lend their full power and completeness to those values – it is something that awakens so much more in the reader than just the image of a repulsive, decomposing corpse, with everything that belongs to it.

Presented in a piece in which Leipoldt intrepidly tries to inform his readers of the level of involvement needed in literary criticism, the didactic tone that typifies Leipoldt's writing at the time is evident, but it is also noteworthy that he is defending a poem written in 1861 and not something more recent. It is almost as if Leipoldt were writing to the kind of readership that would have been startled and offended by Baudelaire in the 1860s, and perhaps he gleaned that his largely conservative, Calvinist Afrikaans readership could well have been shocked by a poem that was at that point already seventy years old. What matters here is Leipoldt's selection of nineteenth century material in order to illustrate a point about the appreciation of poetry and to explain something of the application necessary on the part of

the reader in engaging with the poem. Apart from the poem's presentation of the morbid and grotesque<sup>110</sup>, *Une Charogne* is an example of a conflict between Romanticism and early modernism. Even though it is located in the modern cityscape of Paris that Baudelaire's definitive writing always appreciated, the poem has an affinity with Romantic subjectivity, especially when the speaker predicts the inevitable decaying of his partner's corpse once buried but injects it with metaphors of afterlife and spiritual consolidation. The bulk of Leipoldt's poetry was patently Romantic and, throughout the first two novels of the *Valley* trilogy, so were his prose sensibilities. Bradbury and McFarlane (1991: 47), paraphrasing Alvarez and Kermode, argue that "the intense subjectivity of the Romantic spirit remains central to the modern arts... a continuity into Modernism of the primary Romantic concerns with consciousness". In Leipoldt's works, there is this kind of continuity and, for instance, in *Oom Gert Vertel en Ander Gedigte* as well as *Stormwrack*, there is a constant interweaving of Romantic odes to nature (a significant narrative habit in *Stormwrack* is to devote the bulk of most of the chapters to reveries about the Valley in season) and long passages in which the narrator looks deeply into a character's thoughts with "harder", more unyielding descriptions of war<sup>111</sup>. Bradbury and McFarlane's description of modernism is that it was "in most countries an extraordinary compound of the futuristic and the nihilistic, the revolutionary and the conservative... it was a celebration of a technological age and a condemnation of it" (1991: 47).<sup>112</sup>

Leipoldt arguably finds the seemingly Romantic inclinations of Baudelaire's poem most attractive. Likewise, his affinity for Saint-Beuve also situates Leipoldt's thinking as similar to that of a more muddled nineteenth century writer, a figure unable to take subjectivity and place it in the box of Romanticism or post-Romanticism, making the figure itself illustrative of a "transitional" moment between Romanticism and modernism. Saint-Beuve criticised Flaubert's *Salammô* for the very innovations that would mark it as a proto-modernist text (Brunazzi, 1997: 400), yet this same contradictory approach to modern life in the mid-to-late

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<sup>110</sup> Leipoldt showed an interest in obscene violence, the grotesque and the reprehensible throughout his career; see Burgers (1960) and Gray (2000b), p.14

<sup>111</sup> See Naremore (1998), p.43

<sup>112</sup> I find these binaries located in the last eight chapters of *Stormwrack*, as the nature reveries of the narrative begin to tussle for space with the apprehensive descriptions of the impact of war. Here, the novel is confronted with its own support of progressive nineteenth century thinking but also forced to acknowledge how easily progress is associated with warfare and its implications of conquest and imposition.



nineteenth century is found in most of Baudelaire's works<sup>113</sup>. There is, in this, a foreshadowing of the characteristics of modernism in Europe in the twentieth century and, possibly, the proto-modernism of Baudelaire and Flaubert was even more unreserved. Who is to say Eliot's "patient euthanized on a table" in *The Lovesong of J. Alfred Prufrock* isn't a less bellicose, twentieth century version of Baudelaire's "cadaver"?

Berman makes a compelling argument for Baudelaire as the first true modernist (1988: 133), or, in his initial words, the writer "who did more than anyone in the nineteenth century to make the men and women of his century aware of themselves as moderns" (1988: 132). While his devotion to the work of Poe and his writing about Paris are a major part of his legacy<sup>114</sup>, his influence on Leipoldt may lie in his views on the bourgeoisie of his time as well as his regular cultural observations published in newspapers. We may note that Leipoldt occupied almost a similar public intellectual space to the one Baudelaire had: both had regular "space" for their opinions in city newspapers (1988: 147). Also, the wholly complex and incongruous nature of Baudelaire's thoughts on the "modern" are in some ways found in Leipoldt, too. Berman discusses Baudelaire's contradictory impulses to the idea of progress in Baudelaire's 1855 essay "On the Modern Idea of Progress as Applied to the Fine Arts". In this essay, Baudelaire describes progress as "this obscure beacon, invention of present-day philosophizing... this modern lantern which throws a stream of chaos on all subjects of knowledge... This grotesque idea, which has flowered on the soil of modern fatuity, has discarded each man from his duty, has delivered the soul from responsibility, has released the will from all the bonds imposed on it by love and beauty..." (Baudelaire, 1965: 121-129).

Berman's analysis of this quote reads beauty as "something static.... Demanding rigid obedience and imposing punishments on its recalcitrant modern subjects, extinguishing all forms of Enlightenment... because [Baudelaire] is worried about an increasing 'confusion of material order with spiritual order' that the modern romance of progress spreads" (1988: 138). If we apply both Baudelaire and Berman's quotes to Leipoldt, we are likely to find a similar tone in the South African writer's feeling, as if Leipoldt was the Baudelaire of his age, upholding a fascination for the Romantic. Yet, like Baudelaire, Leipoldt was also positive about modern progress, but more for the modern progress of the nineteenth century than for

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<sup>113</sup> See Berman (1988), p.137-139

<sup>114</sup> Berman quotes the poet Theodore De Banville's tribute to Baudelaire: "He accepted modern man in his entirety"; see Berman (1988), p.132



that of the twentieth century; while he shows some of Baudelaire's polarity in relation to modernity (1988: 139), his passion and aversion are split over the two centuries rather than commenting only on his contemporary period of the 1930s. This leaning characterises the *Valley* trilogy, as will be discussed in the chapters dealing with the novels of the trilogy.

In the following sections of this chapter, I will briefly explore Leipoldt's interests in the nineteenth century in a fictional work written and published during the time that he was occupied with the *Valley* trilogy. I will also explore Leipoldt's interest in nineteenth century concerns with degeneration in his memoir, *Bushveld Doctor*.

### ***Die Moord op Muisenberg***

Further evidence of Leipoldt's immersion in and intuitive assessment of the directions of European literature also emerge in his fiction. While it is debatable whether his argument that *Ulysses* was little more than a document of paranoia is strangely apt or wide of the mark, his reverence for one of classical modernity's earliest scribes, Edgar Allen Poe, is evidenced not only in his heralding Poe as the progenitor of the art of fear-making in literature (Leipoldt, 1990: 18), but also in his appropriating Poe-style elements of ratiocination in his first detective novel, *Die Moord op Muisenberg* (1931). Possibly one of the earliest South African attempts at detective fiction, *Die Moord op Muisenberg* wears its Poe and Doyle influences proudly and also showcases Leipoldt's stated interest in Freudian psychology in its avid interest in the mind and motivations of the murderer. This pursuit of the Freudian also permeates Leipoldt's other fiction of the same period (Kannemeyer, 1999: 540), and especially his novel *Die Donker Huis* (1931).

Leipoldt was content to remain in the idiom of Poe and Doyle. Leipoldt employs Poe and Doyle's nineteenth century take on modernity in his modus operandi and also shows glimpses of awareness of a late nineteenth century preference for the fantastic. This occurs when a speculative discussion of a "perfect murder" in *Die Moord op Muisenberg*<sup>115</sup> takes in the local supernatural notion of 'paljas'<sup>116</sup>, something that recurs in another brief aside in *Stormwrack*. Alongside this minor deviation to *enchantment*<sup>117</sup> in Leipoldt's first detective novel (he would write two more, using the same characters, thereby creating his own

<sup>115</sup> *Die Moord op Muisenberg*, p. 10

<sup>116</sup> A reference to magic, although the word also describes clowns.

<sup>117</sup> See Saler (2003), pp. 599-607

detective fiction series), there are more interesting approaches to the science and the art of murder that drive the narrative along, yet again in keeping with nineteenth century detective fiction.

Generally, Leipoldt's detectives fit squarely with the dandy-like and aristocratic detectives<sup>118</sup> proposed by Poe and Holmes, and in one moment a character compares the art of cooking to the art of detection, clear evidence of Leipoldt's patrician outlook at work<sup>119</sup>. The Cape Town scenery is in the background, and there are passages describing the detective, Jan Slink, making use of public transport or following a few leads around the city, and in one instance the power and immediacy of the city press is also mentioned<sup>120</sup> regarding media coverage of a court case. However, in a clever appropriation of Poe's city-modernity writing in *The Man of the Crowd*, Leipoldt fulfils the obsession of Poe's convalescent by locating an actual crime hidden by a crowd when the murder of the novel's title takes place on a crowded beach. Typically Leipoldtian, the use of Cape natural imagery (that which sets Cape Town apart from most cityscapes) is preferred to a street scene. Other touches evident in the novel that are also found in Leipoldt's general writing trajectory are the familiar, patrician fixation with the term 'art'<sup>121</sup>, a seemingly ironic, mocking use of stream-of-consciousness technique<sup>122</sup> to report a character's dialogue (something that occurs in *Gallows Gecko* as well) and a hint of cosmopolitanism (as well as the intolerant attitude that opposes it) in the mixed-race presence of the beach scene mentioned earlier<sup>123</sup>. The detective's father, Slink Snr, is a respected character in the mould of prominent characters in the *Valley* trilogy. He is a very well read and bilingual Englishman settled in South Africa, and, possessing a great knowledge of forensics and recent, local criminal history, he is the actual detective solving the novel's mystery. The novel affords him some time to be a *flâneur*<sup>124</sup> as well as a master of ratiocination, highlighting this when Slink Snr invites the suspects of the beach murder to his house for dinner and a game of poker, setting subtle traps in the game and reading the

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<sup>118</sup> Yet Slink, Jnr seems more middle-class bureaucrat

<sup>119</sup> *Die Moord op Muisenberg*, p. 122

<sup>120</sup> *Die Moord op Muisenberg*, p. 49

<sup>121</sup> *Die Moord op Muisenberg*, pp.1, 12, 53-54, 88-90

<sup>122</sup> *Die Moord op Muisenberg*, p. 72-73

<sup>123</sup> *Die Moord op Muisenberg*, p. 13

<sup>124</sup> *Die Moord op Muisenberg*, p. 142

behaviour of the players<sup>125</sup>. The novel's attention to detail during the autopsy scene showcases Leipoldt's medical training while the drawing out of the resolution of the mystery is similar to what happens in *Galgsalmander*, *Gallows Gecko* and *The Mask*.

*Die Moord op Muisenberg* is relevant to my study of Leipoldt as a reluctant modernist because it is influenced by nineteenth century detective fiction, that which Raymond Chandler famously dismissed as "drawing room" detective fiction compared to the twentieth century emergence of hard-boiled detective fiction in North America<sup>126</sup>. Out of step with this more modern and nihilistic detective fiction, Leipoldt's novel is comfortable with its Poe and Doyle influences, similar to Leipoldt's literary journalism which regularly turns to the nineteenth century when discussing what he considers to be modern innovations.

### ***Bushveld Doctor***

In *Bushveld Doctor*, Leipoldt laid out many of the arguments against nationalism that inform the *Valley* trilogy, but in this instance he opted for the more accessible medium of the memoir, shedding light on his ten-year experience as school medical inspector in the rural Transvaal during the 1910s and 1920s. Through his recollections of life in the 'bushveld', Leipoldt both describes the then relatively unknown part of South Africa and the people he encountered there and constructs binding arguments for his anti-nationalist feelings. Strikingly, for a famous local writer, Leipoldt is remarkably candid in his criticisms and projections, and his medical experience is deployed as the substance behind his theory that the *bushveld* he endured served as a microcosm of what he warned would be the biological and moral degeneration of the white race in South Africa. The chapters in *Bushveld Doctor* could be singled out as both stinging as well as informative essays offering Leipoldt's opinions on diverse topics all threaded together by his experience in that rural area. He berates the country's moral neglect of the *bushveld* children, who were largely mentally defective in 'Settler's Children'. In 'The Old President' he discusses the restrained *bushveld* respect for the memory of late Republican president Paul Kruger, a respect not tainted by the

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<sup>125</sup> Another example of Leipoldt drawing inspiration from his personal life, as he was known to be a ferocious card player; see Kannemeyer (1999), p. 517.

<sup>126</sup> Chandler mentioned in this when paying tribute to the pioneer of hard-boiled detective fiction in North America, Hammet. Chandler's criticism of nineteenth century detective fiction, as well as the popular but retrograde twentieth century detective fiction of Agatha Christie and Dorothy Sayers, also seems to me to be indicative of modernism's tension with its own past, or with earlier forms of modernism; see Chandler, cited in Naremore (1998), p. 46, 52.

political enhancement and agitations then occurring in the National Party. Indifferent sentiments about the Voortrekkers and their influence on the country's unequal race policies are brought up in 'Dingaan's Day'. In 'Sex and Sentiment' there is a continuance of his progressive lectures on sex, sexuality and adolescence (in the context of the strict Afrikaner Calvinism that limited discussions on sex) that he first published in a book, *Praatjies met die Oumense* (Conversations with the Elders) in 1918, at the very time that he was engaged in his *bushveld* work. In 'The Black and White' he refers to his upbringing as the grandson of a missionary and the son of a pastor as the reason for his commitment to a racially democratic South Africa, and in 'The Coolie' he attempts, perhaps less successfully, to offer a sincere understanding of Durban-based Indian peoples, derogatorily referred to as "coolies".

Of some interest for a discussion of the *Valley* trilogy would be the subdued resistance to nationalist tendencies Leipoldt describes in 'The Old President'. Somehow, outside of time, the *bushveld* people have fond, familiar memories of Paul Kruger as a humble man who regularly frequented the *bushveld* even during his presidency, memories that his biographers, Leipoldt laments, had all failed to capture. This also explains Leipoldt's lifelong ambition to write the definitive biography of Kruger, which he was ultimately not able to do. Not only does Leipoldt's own affectionate recollection of his meeting with Kruger in Utrecht in 1902 support his warmth for the former Republican president, it also shows in his largely favourable descriptions in the trilogy of most of the key players in the South African War, including Kruger, Cecil Rhodes and even Alfred Milner and Gordon Sprigg.<sup>127</sup>

The concluding chapter, 'Afterthoughts', summarises Leipoldt's dissatisfaction with the South African government of the 1930s, comparing it unfavourably with governance before 1913 (Leipoldt, 1980a: 252):

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<sup>127</sup> Like some of the stately characters in the *Valley* and the *Village* in *Gallows Gecko* and *Stormwrack*, Leipoldt's narrator often describes each of these afore-mentioned politicians as imminently likable on a basic, personal level, and instead blames the avatar of war for their imbroglio in an unfavourable history. Andrew Quakerley's memory of meeting with Kruger is undoubtedly Leipoldt's in *Stormwrack*; see Leipoldt (2001), p. 268. As the people of the *Village* in *Stormwrack* are simple folk but not easily impressed by merely anyone's character, as can be seen by their favourable reception of Rhodes (Leipoldt, 2001: 248), so the people of the *bushveld* Leipoldt describes are unique for their alternative view of Kruger, a memory of him that is somewhat intimate and unaffected by historical event (Leipoldt, 1980a), making him both a quietly revered deity as well as an ordinary man; see Leipoldt (2001), p. 248 and (1980a). The fact of war is what, Leipoldt seems to suggest, colours ideas and acuties of players like Kruger and if one takes into account his extreme displeasure, evinced in his 1920s journalism and in *The Mask*, at the South African War being used to augment national Afrikaner feeling, this chapter further supports Leipoldt's attempts at creating a reading of an alternative South African history. In it, the *bushveld* people are almost similar to the *Valley* and *Village* communities of the trilogy, except that they appear even more distanced from historical events.

Public opinion in the Union is today less organized and less knowledgeable than it was before Union took place. The reasons for that are mainly that since 1913 it has centred not around problems of national importance, but around party dissensions that owe their existence to personal animosities artificially crystallized into what appeared to be principles and obscured by political ideologies that originate from prejudice and cultural dissimilarities rather than from a broad-based, creative patriotism, able and willing to take from the past that which is formative and good and to throw on the rubbish heap whatever is outworn and productive of strife and dissent.

Leipoldt then dismisses the capital of the Union, Pretoria, as a negative space, both geographically and in its status as the residence of the country's decision-makers, being particularly derisive regarding the government's ineffectual attitude towards rural people and its depressing climate for its own inhabitants:

As if by a cruel jest of Fate, the administrative capital of the Union is at a spot which is totally unsuited to develop energy in those who have to live there; its climate is soporific, depressing and demoralizing. Pretoria is in spirit and essence merely a magnified village, intensively sensitive to criticism, with the sensitiveness of a patriarch out of touch with youth and innovation. It owes whatever stimulates it to its juxtaposition to Johannesburg, that throbbing nerve centre of industry and activity whose unlimited and easily earned wealth are colossal factors in shaping the destinies of South Africa. Whatever improvement or progress is to be anticipated in the future is unlikely to emanate from the capital, simply because the complacency that is bred there reacts disastrously upon all reform that attempts to go to the root of the evils from which the country today suffers. (1980a: 253)

Leipoldt correctly identifies Johannesburg as the centre of South African modernity in the twentieth century, a fact he was vaguely muted on in the *Valley* trilogy, and by contrast Pretoria is posited in the above quote as a backward village. The concern for both the urban

and the rural comes to represent something of Leipoldt's local modernism in that future developments lay equally in city and country:

Of these evils the chief is the steady dispersal of a potentially strong and healthy peasant community from the land, which is its sanctuary and stay, into the industrialized centres where unemployment is already a powerful deteriorating factor. A second evil is the degeneration that is observable in the rural community itself, as the result of preventable disease like malaria and redwater, and of the lack of a balanced diet. You must not tell it in Gath nor whisper it in Askelon, so be it you speak or whisper in understandable Afrikaans, that there is such degeneration, for to do so is accounted rank, unadulterated 'racialism' more virulent and venomous than hinting that South Africa is as yet quite unable to defend herself from foreign aggression. (1980a: 253)

Leipoldt apparently identifies his own position as the harbinger of uncertainty as a precarious one, mentioning that his speculations would be considered traitorous racialism. To add to the prescient World War II caution at the end of the above quote, Leipoldt elaborates on his theory of degeneration, sounding not very dissimilar to D.H. Lawrence, or indeed, Ezra Pound, who wanted a "new civilization" (Stevenson, 1992: 6):

While politicians are talking about white civilization in Africa... they are assuming that the problem of European civilization is merely an economic one. So it is in a sense, for at bottom all questions that concern the stability of a community are, strictly speaking, economic questions... The problem that confronts the white people in South Africa is how to raise future white generations that are sound, healthy, an asset instead of a liability to the State... Investigation must be made to tell us how these deadly factors that are now productive of degeneration can best be counteracted. We know already how seriously the neglect of consideration for our native population, its health and its progress towards civilization, militates against the development of the white community. Native ill health reacts upon European health and well-being. The limitation of competitive effort through the exclusion of the native from practically all industries, except in the

field of unskilled and almost slave labour, reacts upon the morale of the whites. Class legislation of any kind inevitably produces inferiority among the protected classes by eliminating the fricative stimulus of rivalry and emulation, and substituting it for an artificial security subversive of effort and endeavour.  
(Leipoldt, 1980a: 254)

The above quote is astonishing for its almost apocalyptic trepidation, its unique, bleak outlook for white South Africa coming from a white South African confident in his biological representation. The modern Afrikaner was a species with a limited time span, Leipoldt seemed to say. In *The Mask*, Gertrude scornfully remarks that the “poor whites” have become “Master(s) of the North” (Leipoldt, 2001: 537). Pretoria, as we have already seen, is described as a futile capital by Leipoldt (who was based in Pretoria when he wasn’t active in the *bushveld*), run by a government that needed “poor whites” to secure its first electoral victory in the 1920s. Later, in this thesis, the *Valley* trilogy’s concern with biological degeneration in third and fourth generation white families will be discussed, but for now it is perhaps worth mentioning how Leipoldt’s speculative theory contrasts with National Socialist interests in eugenics in Germany at the same time. According to Coetzee, before the end of World War II in 1945 racial discourse in Europe was unashamedly characterised by its “nakedness, its shamelessness” (1988: 142), and this had much to do with the fact that it was steeped in what was believed to be scientific fact, stemming from the nineteenth century and forming the myth that “Western Europeans were biologically destined to rule the world” (1988: 142). A concern about degeneration developed in the nineteenth century from those who were concerned that modernity – “the growth of industry, colonial expansion and the dynamism of commerce” (1988: 146) would reveal a dark underbelly to an otherwise seemingly thriving European civilisation. Coetzee describes it as a fear that “the great European empires were coming to resemble nothing so much as the Roman Empire in its latter years, sick unto death behind the exterior of might and opulence, their sickness betrayed by the squalor and degradation of their great cities but also, more subtly, by the doubt and self-questioning that infected their more sensitive minds.” (1988: 147)

What ensued was the science of degeneration, the medical and psychological probing that had as an aim the definition and isolation of degenerate elements in civilisation, with even the nineteenth century decadent artists under scrutiny (1988: 147). It was, to paraphrase Coetzee, the practice of segregation and ‘othering’, strengthened through the trials of positivist science



but also bound to fail because it sought “a psychological and ultimately biological explanation for what was a cultural condition” (1988: 147). Yet, it was commonplace to find terms associated with degeneracy in naturalistic fiction and medical studies (1988: 148) and, although Coetzee identifies how this vocabulary influenced the work of South African writer Sarah Gertrude Millin in the 1920s, it is also found in two forms in the *Valley* trilogy. Elsewhere<sup>128</sup>, I have written about the display of one form of Leipoldt’s interest in degeneracy in *The Mask*. There, I observed Leipoldt’s concentration on the “non-white” characters of the trilogy, looking at the impact of miscegenation in *The Mask*. More immediately, however, lingering nineteenth century discourses on degeneracy, as well as Social Darwinism, can be found embedded in the *Valley* trilogy’s persistent claims that the South African white race was degenerating owing to its own habits and indulgences, and no amount of racially or culturally separatist policies would prevent this. Making clear his stance on this, Leipoldt, at a meeting of the Sons of England Club meeting in 1941, made a speech in which he claimed, “miscegenation must occur” (Kromhout, 1954: 110). The statement is typically provocative but underlines Leipoldt’s consistency in opposing racial segregation as well as his stance against sexual relations across colour lines being deemed inappropriate by the National Party<sup>129</sup>. The modernity he describes in *Bushveld Doctor* is irregular, firstly to the country’s black and coloured population, but also to the white population itself; this is a warning for the twentieth century framed in nineteenth century terms of degeneration. Leipoldt’s warning runs throughout the *Valley* trilogy, as the theme is mentioned and discussed in each novel as part of Leipoldt’s modernist critique. Elleke Boehmer mentions “the pervasive fascination with narratives of degeneration, decline and extinction” (Boehmer, 2005: 173) as “further evidence of the interrelation of the modernist and the imperial” (2005: 173). The *Valley* trilogy’s concern with degeneration seems to me to be proof of Boehmer’s findings, as the trilogy links Afrikaner nationalism as well as the history of the imperial/colonial enterprise to its exploration of degeneration.

Theories about degeneration and his preference for nineteenth century forms of literature and criticism typify Leipoldt the writer through most of his career. As a writer living in the twentieth century, he showed a sense of being ill-at-ease with modernity but continued to

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<sup>128</sup> See Oppelt (2007)

<sup>129</sup> Elias Vantloo, the villainous figure in Leipoldt’s play, *Afgode* (1931), as well as *The Mask*, is exposed as a fraudulent nationalist. He supports the National Party’s prohibiting of sexual relations across colour lines but is found to have been guilty of it himself.



write about it. His nineteenth century influences serve to enhance the critiques Leipoldt offers in his journalism and his fiction. The nineteenth century ‘tone’ he offers in most of his critical pieces characterises him as an older person to his assumed or imagined readers, as if he were offering advice or lessons to do with life. In the fiction of the *Valley*, the nineteenth century is the setting of two-thirds of the fiction. While the *Valley* trilogy’s comparison between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries favours the former as having been more ideal to live in (and, needless to say, the location would be the liberal Cape), the reluctant modernist in Leipoldt also acknowledges that much of what he dislikes about twentieth century South Africa started in the nineteenth century.

The following chapter examines how far back Leipoldt takes his study of ‘what went wrong’ in *Gallows Gecko*, the first novel of the trilogy. The idea of Leipoldt as a reluctant modernist necessitates that this novel be read as being both about the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in South Africa. The nineteenth century setting is a device used to shed light on Leipoldt’s opinion of 1920s and 1930s South Africa. Some of what has been discussed in this chapter regarding Leipoldt’s use of nineteenth century ideas to comment on twentieth century social realities will be incorporated in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 4: GALLOWS GECKO

### *The relationship between history and fiction*

Discussing the *Valley* trilogy, Stephen Gray (1984: 5) argues that as an artist and not a historian, Leipoldt was able to make fiction set in the past comment on the present of the 1930s. A reader of the trilogy would “have to read backwards in time as reductive and anti-developmental to decode the history in Leipoldt’s fiction” (1984: 10). According to Gray,

Leipoldt was not interested in using history to illustrate how we come to be at one particular moment, with the implication that the moment is a summation and climax of all pre-existing events; he was far more interested in showing that history itself was, and is, in dynamic flux, a continuing process of transformations. (1984:9)

As mentioned in Chapters Two and Three, the fiction Leipoldt presents in the trilogy stands outside the history it comments on even as it also reveals enough realist detail to tie it comfortably to the history. What makes the *Valley* trilogy interesting is the space that is left in-between history and fiction. In this space the reader tries to decode elements of both, rather as if she/he were formulating an opinion, or experiencing a feeling, after having listened to a conversation between two parties. The act of contemplating after an exposure to a conversation, or a set of conversations, as is the case in *Gallows Gecko*, leaves it to the reader to weigh the interaction between art and history. Both art and history, in this context, are presented by authors, namely the novelist and the historian. In accordance with Gray’s theory of the difference between the historian and the novelist, Leipoldt does not work empirically but symbolically, validating by means of selective substantiation (1984: 5).

...the historian uses a data base as an observed resource, then makes a priori extrapolations, the novelist works from culture theory, through a formal process governed by well-articulated conventions, and thereby re-invents the world of the work, rendering reality factitious or artefactual...

The way in which this chapter aims to read the relationship between history and fiction in *Gallows Gecko* is to concentrate on, firstly, the stylistic touches of the novel *before* examining how history is *used* in the fiction. Because *Gallows Gecko* is situated the furthest back in time from the 1930s in which Leipoldt wrote the novel, it features the longest reach back into history. Through regular variations of style and form in the narrative, history is itself different processes of exposition, different conversations. The history is not necessarily changed, or altered, but the fiction of *Gallows Gecko* approaches it conversationally, and the novel itself emerges finally as a conversation. Leipoldt approaches history not as a set of facts or events but as a set of conversations. Unlike facts, conversations are fleeting and unstable. The question of *who* the conversation engages is harder to answer if the novel is merely a tracing of history. If we take Gray's point about Leipoldt being more interested in showing that history itself was in dynamic flux, we see that the conversation engages our experience of change, the process of transformation itself. It is an acknowledgement of modernity and a conversation with or about it.

In his foreword to the abridged version of *Gallows Gecko*, *Chameleon on the Gallows*, Gray argues that Leipoldt's essay, *Cultural Development*, written for the *Cambridge History of the British Empire* series (Vol. 8, 1936), is the mandate for the fiction of the *Valley* trilogy (Gray, 2000b: 10). In this essay, Leipoldt traces the development of English and Afrikaans white cultures in South Africa, offering comparative studies of English and Afrikaans literature and working out a "theory of the social evolution of South Africa" (2000b: 10) that runs through the trilogy. Gray also describes this as a "fully-nuanced cultural history developing alongside a fictional sequence that is a rarity in South African literature" (1984: 10). At the beginning of the essay, Leipoldt mentions that

... although English and Afrikaans culture developed along their own lines, their mutual influencing is beginning to create a South African Culture that takes the best of each of them. These beginnings are fragmentary as English and Afrikaans still exist separately and their differences in outlook, education and history suggest that they run divergently rather than parallel. (1936: 844)

This critical point emerges time and again in many of the discourses presented in *Gallows Gecko* (aside from the fact that Dutch is still spoken in the period setting, and not Afrikaans),

and Gray points out that “the programme is there in the fiction” (2000b: 11), while calling the abridged version “one of the most clearly explicated historical novels ever written in South Africa” (2000b: 11).

*Gallows Gecko* is made subordinate to some of the critical ideas of Leipoldt’s essay, revealing its purpose. The framework is the story of Nolte’s settlement in the Valley and his development as a farmer and citizen there, but the frame is held together by “bundled threads of discourse” (Merrington, 2003: 38). These “threads of discourse” enable the reader to go back and forth between the 1840s of the novel’s setting and the 1930s it was written in. This is possible because the conversations that occur in the novel are usually far in advance of their period setting, making them both speculative fiction and retrospective commentary. The alternative history proposed by the novel is merely also a conversation that includes realism, the *bildungsroman*, social comedy, bucolic text and romanticism. There are elements of all these forms throughout the novel, which does not comfortably fit into any one genre. The descriptions of a liberal Cape tradition found in family dynasties are associated with the form of the open-ended generational saga (Gray, 1984: 8), which typifies the trilogy. Leipoldt’s medical interests regarding biological degeneration, influenced by nineteenth century ideas (as discussed in the previous chapter) are also prevalent in the novel.

### **Realism**

Something *Gallows Gecko* has in common with its original, Afrikaans incarnation, *Galgsalmänder*, is its depiction of a certain time and place familiar to Leipoldt. The Valley area is identifiable as the Cedarberg area, where Leipoldt grew up, and although, in *Gallows Gecko*, this is never mentioned or named (just as the Village in *Stormwrack*, which is Clanwilliam, is never named) to maintain the construction of the Valley community (in all three novels of the trilogy) as a microcosm of South Africa, this is the real-life setting of Leipoldt’s fiction. In *Galgsalmänder*, possibly by accident<sup>130</sup>, Clanwilliam is mentioned once, yet even without that single mention the scenic descriptions in the novel demarcate the real-life setting. In a review of the novel for *Die Volkstem*, 11 March 1933, M.S.B. Kritzinger<sup>131</sup> acknowledges Leipoldt’s dedicated journalism as the main reason *Galgsalmänder* succeeds as a faithful reconstruction of the Clanwilliam area in the 1840s. *Gallows Gecko* does much the same, and Gray (1984: 3-4) argues that Leipoldt, in the novel

<sup>130</sup> See Kannemeyer (1999), p. 543.

<sup>131</sup> See ‘Galgsalmänder’ in Nienaber (1948).

(and the trilogy) acts as a scribe for Clanwilliam by absorbing the town's oral tradition he was exposed to as a boy. Leipoldt's memories of the Clanwilliam of his youth and his third-hand acquisition of its history while growing up there is an example of how, for Leipoldt, oral transmission is a preferred material for *making* history (1984: 2). Gray asserts that, in this way, tradition is more of a valuable possession than recorded history (1984: 2), and the importance of tradition to the Valley community in *Gallows Gecko* becomes a significant motif in the fiction. Leipoldt's acting as a scribe for Clanwilliam<sup>132</sup>, as Gray describes it, sees him making use of oral history as an artist, not as a historian. The importance of an oral tradition is emphasised in other Leipoldt writings, specifically his remembrances of the Clanwilliam of his youth<sup>133</sup> and also in his writing about food culture in the Cape, where "Cape Malay" recipes were often passed on generationally through word of mouth<sup>134</sup>.

What emerges in *Gallows Gecko* is a predilection for the intimately local that typifies the focus of characters in the *Valley* trilogy:

Leipoldt's Valley fictions are narrowly but intensely restricted to an analysis of one coherent South African community (Clanwilliam), where many historical records were destroyed By accident. This kind of history, then, cannot be wholly scientifically researched but would depend on other sources, most notably oral tradition...With the natural presumption that such an isolated community life encourages, the locals to this use the definite article in description: the District, the Valley, etc. However, there is no one-to-one correlation between the page and history... (Gray, 1984: 1-5)

In *Gallows Gecko*, there is a dedication to reconstructing the memory of a Valley community that once existed, but it remains far out of reach, so the realism bases itself on an oral tradition. Leipoldt's realism in *Gallows Gecko* takes into account that history is wisdom after the fact, the explanation of why we have arrived at a certain moment, but it invests itself in

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<sup>132</sup> The library at Clanwilliam, where Leipoldt spent much of his time as a youth, was burned down during the South African War, and Leipoldt dramatises this in *Stormwrack* and *The Mask*. Gray speculates that, with Clanwilliam having lost its recorded history in this calamity, Leipoldt acted as a literary scribe for the town and recaptured its history in the fiction of the *Valley* trilogy; see Gray (1984), p. 2.

<sup>133</sup> See Leipoldt (1999), p. 355-375.

<sup>134</sup> See Oppelt (2012).

what history cannot explain: what we might have become, or what we might yet become<sup>135</sup>. In this, the realism in *Gallows Gecko* does not imply “what we have become”, even as the novel does follow a linear chronological sequence that follows through the rest of the trilogy. The question ‘what if’ characterises the world represented in *Gallows Gecko*, as though this world operated on a unique, internal logic that is plausible because the realism lies in the recognisable people, and their ways, which Leipoldt learned of through oral tradition. The ‘what if’ becomes a “plausible impossibility”<sup>136</sup> that is realised when the author provides a sense of the world that is continuous with our expectations<sup>137</sup>. *Gallows Gecko* may present an alternative reading of history but there are no completely implausible elements in the novel to render the alternative reading an impossible reading. Instead,

... the realist work is always concerned with the relationship between the internal conflicts among the characters, or within the characters, and the society from which they have been drawn... disorder is central to Realism and refracts, rather than reflects, the conflictive elements of society at large. The difference lies in the contrast between the finality of a fiction, which brings its action to a close, and the openness of history, in which life goes on unendingly... Realism does not present a definition of reality at all, but a certain description of the world which does not impose order on chaos but rather, by the very nature of the questions it poses, reveals disorder amidst apparent order. Such a description, moreover, is not antecedent to or a condition of Realism; it is the thing itself. (Anchor, 1983: 115 and 117)

*Gallows Gecko*, and *Galgsalmander* before it, received praise for capturing the mood of Clanwilliam and the Cedarberg area during a specific period. The mood is explicated through the attentive but not scientifically accurate descriptions of life in that area. Of the novels in the trilogy, it is the least modernist, if we consider modernism to thrive on experimentations with form such as breaking from conventions of realism, problematising subjectivity and claiming authenticity through non-linearity. *Gallows Gecko*’s realism, however, shows reactions to modernity and it seems to me that this is a necessary first step in the three-phase model of the *Valley* trilogy. The process begins to change towards the end of *Stormwrack*, in

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<sup>135</sup> see Anchor (1983), p. 116

<sup>136</sup> This term is attributed to Aristotle; see Anchor (1983), p. 116

<sup>137</sup> Ibid

which the style moves closer to those usually associated with modernism. In *The Mask*, the move from realism to modernism is more manifest. Yet, a core focal element from *Gallows Gecko* remains intact even in the third novel, namely the idea that transformation is a continuing process. This is what Gray recognises as Leipoldt's theme of the impact of history, or of the historical sense, in the process of change (Gray, 1984: 8).

### ***Bildungsroman and alternative version of history to the Voortrekker myth***

Gray identifies that the first novel of the *Valley* trilogy shows “an alternative version of history to the Trekker myth of white superiority... for the story of Everardus Nolte is really that of a man who chose not to trek, who stayed behind to fight for a bigger, better South Africa” (Gray, 2000b: 12). Instead of trekking, Nolte moves to the Valley and commences a story of settlement, acceptance and growth within the Valley community. In the first few chapters, he is very aware that he is a stranger entering new territory and quickly realises that it is important to make favourable impressions on the “country and its kind” (Leipoldt, 2001: 16) if he is to be happy there. The narrator implies that the Valley folk expect Nolte to follow the example of its 1820 English settlers (most notably Charles Quakerley and Thomas Seldon) who had come to the Valley as strangers but assimilated themselves well (2001: 16). In these early chapters, the focus is on Nolte's trepidation, as he is desperate to keep his past a secret, but also on the Valley as a beautiful, communal but imposing entity.

His wish to become a good, respected neighbour to the Valley-ites and to win their trust sets him on a journey that culminates in their placing faith in him to represent their community in parliament by the end of the novel, even after his secret has been revealed. While he is still a stranger, though, he finds himself impressed as well as overawed by the more established Valley elder Martin Rekker and his aristocratic sense of refinement. He is brought to Rekker by another elder, Oom Dorie, almost as a matter of obligation, as a rite of passage. Sensing a sharpness in the old man and afraid of his ability to recognise armiger, or a strong family name, Nolte's conflicting interests of assimilation and keeping his secret are dramatically underscored by a game of chess he plays with Rekker during these early stages. While being subtly interrogated by the old man regarding his family background<sup>138</sup>, Nolte loses the chess game badly to the superior player, and this serves as an example of the unease and unworthiness he feels (2001: 42).

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<sup>138</sup> Rekker cannot place the name Nolte, as it is a new, government-forged identity for Everardus, whose real name is Amadeus Tereg; see Leipoldt (2001), pp. 13-15, 42.

After nervous starts such as these, Nolte steadily begins to gain the respect he yearns for. Over a period of years, he cultivates a successful farm, a crucial ingredient in securing the respect of the Valley folk and, throughout the narrative, descriptions of the farm flourishing and yielding successful enterprise accord with conversations and debates between characters about social progress that become more pertinent as the story continues. Nolte is a part of almost all these conversations in the novel. On some topics, such as racial equality, he seems stubborn and of the opinion that the white race is a master race, and cannot conceive of the idea of equality between races. On other matters, he is considerably moved. After listening to Reverend Von Bergmann's criticism of the lack of education for white children in the Valley (2001: 38), Nolte eventually builds and funds a school there (2001: 69). In another instance, after a vacation at the seaside, Nolte is struck by the existence of a community of reclusive, white 'pan-dwellers', people living on salt pans along the coast. After observing them, he pledges a commitment to helping them in whichever ways he can, again focusing on the education of their children (2001: 120). In fact, this becomes a harbinger of Nolte's emerging career as a politician, and also occurs before he becomes involved in the transport trade (2001: 144). By this point in the narrative, Nolte is characterised as steadily responding to the lure of modernisation, represented by his involvement in progressive politics and industry that will lead him to Cape Town by the end of the novel. The story of his growth is therefore one of twice assuming a new role or identity. He comes to the Valley with a new, forged identity, seeking to settle and establish himself there, and by the end he leaves the Valley with a new nickname and a responsibility as the Valley's parliamentary representative for the new Legislative Assembly.

Through the journey of Nolte, another sub-story of acceptance emerges with the arrival in the Valley of the French Huguenot descendant, Pierre Mabuis. Because of his Catholicism, alcoholism and uncertain heritage that is neither Dutch nor English, he is not immediately accepted by the Valley folk, although he is liked in spite of, or perhaps because of, his character eccentricities. It is Nolte who assimilates him into the Valley and eventually refers to him as "one of us" (2001: 187)<sup>139</sup> and, through marrying the Valley widow Cornelia Priem, Mabuis, too, becomes permanently settled. In the trajectory of these two characters we see

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<sup>139</sup> At an earlier moment, before Martin Rekker has met Nolte and expressed reservations, Oom Dorie also defends Nolte as "one of us"; Leipoldt (2001), p. 13



Leipoldt's vision of South African society as a tolerant community, settled and close to the land. Their aspiration is to be settled, to conform, to own land and to make it productive.

### *Contesting the Voortrekker myth*

The orthodox view was that modern Afrikaner history sprang from the events of the 'Great Trek', when from 1838 onwards parties of Cape Dutch families migrated by ox wagon east into the regions of Natal and Zululand, and north beyond the Orange and Vaal Rivers. This was a Republican historiography of the quest for independence from British colonial governance, and of a sense of distinct destiny, couched in terms of epic struggle and religious covenant, modeled on the biblical story of the Israelites' escape from bondage in Egypt. This view was promoted by Gustav Preller, editor of the Transvaal-based Afrikaans newspaper *Die Volkstem* (Voice of the People), who through a series of works on Voortrekker heroes established this concept of the 'Great Trek' and the Voortrekker as the founding myth of the Afrikaner people. (Merrington, 2003: 35-36)

*Gallows Gecko* shows aspects of the *bildungsroman* form when the narrative concentrates on Nolte, yet this story of a man who chose not to trek also has a deeper implication because of the contestation of the Voortrekker myth present in the novel's fabric. Nolte's journey takes place a year or two after the commencement of the Great Trek. At various points in the narrative, characters' thoughts, conversations, as well as the narrator's own opinions, turn to the Trek, either stemming from news of the Voortrekkers or, as the timeline moves through the 1840s and into the 1850s, the establishment of the Republics of the Transvaal and Orange Free State as direct consequences of the Trek. In the novel, the debate about the Great Trek and speculation about the reasons it occurred can be categorised under what Gray, as already discussed, describes as the novel's focusing on mid-nineteenth century events to comment on twentieth century issues in South Africa. This suggests the reductive, anti-developmental reading that can be applied to the novel: the narrative moves forward but the social commentary moves backward from the twentieth century. To return to concepts discussed in the introductory chapters of this thesis, Leipoldt returns to what was believed to be, in Afrikaner nationalist thinking, the root of Afrikaner heritage and nationhood.

In his article, 'Translating the Great Trek', Jochen Petzold cites numerous writers claiming that the Great Trek was the cornerstone for Afrikaner myth and folklore:

'While the actual Voortrekkers did not attempt to create a single nation-state in the interior of South Africa', Shula Marks and Stanley Trapido concede that the Great Trek 'has been at the heart of much Afrikaner nationalist myth-making'. According to Isabel Hofmeyr, the history of the Great Trek was actively constructed and championed by Afrikaner nationalists around the turn of the century. It was mainly the work of the journalist and linguist, Gustav Preller... that turned the Trek into a key event for Afrikaner identity formation.' The Trek was thus transformed into a 'political myth' that was foundational for Afrikaner identity construction and white minority rule. (Petzold, 2007: 117)

In his poetry collection *Dingaansdag* (1920) and in *Bushveld Doctor*, Leipoldt is critical of the Great Trek, and in this he ran counter to his Afrikaner nationalist peers, including Preller<sup>140</sup>, mentioned in the above quote, with whom he worked, unhappily, at *Die Volkstem* in the mid-1920s (Merrington, 2003: 35-36). Leipoldt's viewpoint against the Trek, "which is a narrative perspective that sets Leipoldt squarely against both the Afrikaner intellectual establishment and popular sentiment of his day" (2003: 36), features prominently throughout the *Valley* trilogy.

Most of the characters in *Gallows Gecko* disagree with the Voortrekkers and their reasons for leaving. In a conversation with Rekker, Nolte initially defends the Voortrekkers as being justified in leaving the Colony due to their dissatisfaction with the Colonial government, but is met with the older man's response:

'I gravely question the propriety of their going,' answered the old man, speaking very seriously. 'Look you, nephew Ev'rard, I recollect the time when we all grumbled against the Company<sup>141</sup>... And later on when the English came, people grumbled at them and longed for the old Company! ... Honestly, Nephew Ev'rard, I can't say that I think there was just cause for trekking. We had as much as they had, in grievance and complaint... but I think... that it would have been better and more

<sup>140</sup> Preller was, like Leipoldt, a member of the South African Party but joined the National Party in the 1920s.

<sup>141</sup> The Dutch East India Company

courageous for them to have remained and fought with us to get salvation.’ (2001: 44-45)

Nolte himself is then given the instruction, by Rekker, to “look over the mountains and spy out the new Canaan” (2001: 47), after Rekker expresses a fear that the Valley folk are degenerating. The call to spy out a new Canaan is a reference to the Voortrekker belief of moving to a promised land, a neo-Canaan for neo-Israelites.

Nolte’s welfare and success in the Valley is shown to be constantly advancing amidst reports of the Voortrekkers toiling on their journeys to the South African interior. The extreme good fortune Nolte seems to regularly receive as he establishes himself is even acknowledged by the narrator (2001: 142), and Nolte himself is shown to be almost puzzled by it (2001: 142). Against the Voortrekker belief in Divine blessing<sup>142</sup>, Nolte is “blessed” while pro-Voortrekker sympathizers have a need to agitate for funds among Valley-ites to support the migrating farmers (2001: 80-82). Nolte’s chief anxiety comes from the secret he keeps from his new friends and the consequences that could await him if the secret emerged. For the killing of a white man, he fears he would be exiled from the Edenic space of the Valley. He is determined to stay in the Valley with the landed gentry while the Voortrekkers struggle and endure hardship away from the Valley. While he is busy becoming one of the aristocratic ruling class of the Valley, the Voortrekkers’ *being* was in their journey, and they are not respected by many of the characters in the novel. The narrator describes the Valley community’s general feeling that the Voortrekkers were “complaining farmers” (2001: 81). Nolte’s journey is placed, in the narrative, against the narrative of the first “modern” Afrikaners. Ironically, it is Nolte, then still a newcomer, who must use his negotiating skill to placate a group of recalcitrant, young Valley folk who oppose the annual jubilee celebrations for Queen Victoria after they are stirred against it by a pro-Voortrekker agitator. This is the closest Nolte comes to the Trek, even though his story is contrasted with the story of the Trek in the novel. Of further interest is the fact that the recalcitrant group admits to being landless and jealous of the Valley’s landowning elite, highlighting issues of class. These are the farmers who were unable to wrest a living from the land, and Nolte is reminded that the wealth that enabled him to settle in the Valley has afforded him a better position than theirs, and he thinks about assisting them in the future. Placating this group is his first significant political act in the novel and it merits attention on another two counts. Throughout the

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<sup>142</sup> See Ridge (1984)

trilogy, there is a concern for young people as being easily impressionable and easily led, the young “hotheads” found in each novel that are symptomatic of the erosion of older traditions as well as degeneration. The recalcitrant group is also a likely reference to the “poor whites” of the 1920s Leipoldt discusses in *Bushveld Doctor* and again in *The Mask*. The unrest at the jubilee celebration looks ahead to troubles in *Stormwrack* and *The Mask* and a similar feeling of unease comes nearer the end of *Gallows Gecko* when Charles and Andrew Quakerley speculate about the Valley’s future after Nolte leaves for parliament, just as a war abroad looms. In ending *Chameleon on the Gallows* on this note (*Gallows Gecko* ends with Nolte wondering about his role as a politician in a conversation with his wife), Gray’s editing emphasises the serial form of Leipoldt’s fiction by preparing the reader for the events of *Stormwrack*:

Although in tone it remains buoyantly comic and celebratory of bourgeois rural values, it stills ends, like *Stormwrack*, on a rather ominous threshold of opening choices—representative and then responsible government loom, as does the Crimean War. The whole community is left poised at a crossroads, invited to choose between unity and incorporation of dissidence into a greater society, or sectionalism and ultimately civil war. In *Stormwrack* we see that it has the latter chosen for it, as the whole nineteenth-century fabric of what Leipoldt thought of as ‘civilization’ and ‘culture’ is torn apart. (Gray, 2000b: 15-16)

With *Gallows Gecko*’s balancing of the story of Nolte and the events of the period that include the Great Trek, the ending of the novel, whether Gray’s version or the original, shows that the balance will be lost. Throughout the novel there is a pervading sense of fragility, a sense that the relations between the two white groups could shatter easily largely due to increasing Dutch/Afrikaner nationalist rhetoric emerging from the events of the Trek itself. Though the relations between the Valley’s two white sections are amicable, tensions between national identities through language and heritage (and conservatism and cosmopolitanism) are evident. The Valley youths, as shown by the jubilee incident, are hotheaded. Nolte represents the generation between the young and the old. The future of the Valley’s intra-race relations (and its race relations between whites and “non-whites”) is placed in his hands when he is considered for a position in parliament once representation is granted to the District.

However, Nolte is a stubborn character. He listens to and comprehends the views of certain characters on topics of racial equality and social justice, but he is not quite ready to accept these views. It is uncertain whether Nolte will be a good leader when he leaves for parliament. Instead of harmony, the novel ends on an uneasy note about the future relations between the white sections of the community.

***The contribution of slavery to the Valley utopia: tensions in Gallows Gecko's resistance to history***

Many of the main characters in *Gallows Gecko* are successful farmers living in wealth and some sophistication, satisfied with their existence outside of Cape Town and more often than not loyal to the English government. The presence of cedarwood tables and portraits of Queen Victoria in the homes of most of these characters is established as a running motif throughout *Gallows Gecko* and *Stormwrack* when the narrator initially describes the interior of Martin Rekker's home (Leipoldt, 2001: 11). These are the characters who put forth the novel's argument for the Valley's patrician way of life as an Edenic response to the Great Trek's narrative of migration, strife and movement. This section of the thesis aims to explore the relationship between the legacies of inheritance that benefitted the novel's characters, and the concomitant history of slavery in the Cape as methods of reading both the resistance to modernity and the irresistible attraction to it as shown in the timeline of the narrative.

Leipoldt has Nolte enter the Valley during the late 1830s, shortly after the abolition of slavery in the British colonies<sup>143</sup>. Ordinance 50, first drafted in 1828, placed an emphasis on a British-governed South Africa that saw no distinction between races and outlawed racist practices, the most obvious at the time being slavery, which was eventually officially abolished on 1 December, 1838, the day of emancipation for all slaves. The narrator of *Gallows Gecko* makes short but regular references to the freed slaves who stayed on their former masters' farms, electing to work as servants. The picture Leipoldt creates is of a gentrified landowning class with a steady base of former slaves, working together to preserve the Valley as a pleasant space, although it is pleasant more to its landowning class than to those who reach no higher than servitude. In the earliest chapters already, the slight narrative asides about former slaves compared to the romantic description of the Valley landowners

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<sup>143</sup> See Begg (2011), p. 109

and Nolte's bid to be assimilated with them (and the Valley) are jolting, but go some way to shedding light on the unsaid. The history of slavery is muted in the novel but serves as a background to the depictions of Romantic harmony between Nolte and his new land. The presence of his servants is always noted in the farm-building moments of the novel, and the former practice of slavery greatly influenced the showcase farms he visits throughout the narrative.

The prosperous farm owners in the novel, Nolte, Rekker, Van Aard, Priem, Seldon and Quakerley, are the refined nobility of the Valley in *Gallows Gecko*, almost the mayoral figures in that the Valley community looks up to them and respects them, as the narrator constantly reminds us. In the first chapters of the novel, all but Nolte are shown to be settled, familiar and attuned to the Valley's aura of the idyllic, because they set the examples of amicability, civility and gentility that the Valley folk admire, respect and follow. Between them there are many gestures towards white conciliation between Dutch/Afrikaner and Englishman, and these gestures are intended to move the Valley away from emerging nationalist debate and polarisation.

Quakerley and Rekker, at various points in the novel (and with numerous other characters), participate in discussions and arguments on race and class, and their thoughts are generally revealed to be partly liberal and democratic, opposed to the implementation of racism if not always free of it. Quakerley, for example, sees black races in South Africa as equal to white in a broad, compassionate sense, but he has reservations on the topic of social equalities. When engaged in a discussion regarding the granting of equal voting rights in the Cape Legislative Assembly to natives, Quakerley makes bold but not entirely translucent points. He speaks against the low qualification of the "non-white" vote and concedes that few "non-whites" had much, if any, property, inadvertently referring to the legacy of slavery:

'...it is preposterous that those of us who have property should be placed on equal footing, so far as the vote is concerned, with the vagrant who has none and merely tenants a house or earns a wage of £50 a year. And what about civilization? While they were about it they might at least have suggested that the voters should be able to read and write and do a little figuring.'" (Leipoldt, 2001: 154)

Quakerley's comments speak to the matter of the role of slavery in the fortunes of the Cape's landowning classes. Quakerley, like Rekker and other characters, stands for equal rights between races, but he also shows a neglect of recent history when he is particular about the kind of equality he wants to see.

As a newcomer to the Valley, Nolte is struck by the cultural maturity and complexity of the residents he encounters, and Martin Rekker impresses him most. Rekker is the novel's authority figure on matters of tracing family lineage and determining whether a specific clan name was linked to nobility or not, and his own heritage puts him in high standing. When Nolte first sees the isolated Rekker farm, *Hoek*, he is inspired by how its original owner, Martinus Rekker, Martin's deceased father, had structured the layout of the farm so that it blended almost seamlessly into the natural environment of the Valley itself and all the more impressive because it was situated between mountain spurs (Leipoldt, 2001: 9). The narrator does, however, mention how Martinus' farm had come to be, informing us that he had bought the land cheaply from the old Company and "had plenty of time and many slaves" (Leipoldt, 2001: 9). The farm is no doubt the immediate inspiration for Nolte's own farm, which is created and attended to through most of the novel. The farms belonging to Seldon, Quakerley and Priem are similarly highly regarded later in the novel, with the prevalent idea being that supreme land cultivation lay in the hands of this elite class. This reminds us of Perry Anderson's assertion that a crucial co-ordinate in understanding modernism as a "cultural field of force" (1984: 104) is the presence of aristocratic or landowning classes in nineteenth century Europe (1984: 104). In the example offered by *Gallows Gecko*, this is appropriate and applicable to South Africa, as, in the compressed world we find in the novel, the concentration is squarely on the landowning characters.

Time and again the novel goes on to address the history of slavery in the Colony, but this usually happens in a disinterested manner or as a minor contextual point in conversations. Despite this, these brief asides do enough to ensure that there is not the abject denial of the role of slavery in the creation and maintenance of the elite class's fortunes and when the matter of the native vote for the Legislative Assembly is debated in the novel, the social concerns raised intentionally or not resurrect the shaping role of slavery to both the Valley's white and "non-white" inhabitants. Nolte's first visit to the Rekker farm introduces the thread by acknowledging the fact that Martinus Rekker was a slave owner and, for all his



kindliness (in keeping with virtually all of the major characters in the novel), still resorted to the behaviour that historically typified Cape slave owners:

The mill-house, built under two large oak trees whose trunks still retained the iron staples to which old Martinhus had bound his recalcitrant slaves as a preliminary to the paternal correction which he was in the habit of administering when he thought it necessary to do so—and in justice to his memory it must be added that he rarely resorted to force, and that, when emancipation came, his slaves, one and all, refused to leave the *Hoek* but remained to serve him loyally as free men and women... (Leipoldt, 2001:10)

Both the fact of Martinhus Rekker's having been a slave owner who enforced discipline as well as the mitigation of any charge that he may have been heavy-handed come in the form of asides, and from here the novel proceeds to follow a similar pattern when the topic of slavery is raised. While, even in a novel that creates a counter space to real events, it may not have been feasible to omit the history of slavery altogether, Leipoldt seems to have felt the need to ensure that it was part of the fabric of his novel without ever placing emphasis on it. The reason may be that, while acknowledging that slavery helped establish the Valley's elite class, this class (in the novel) seemed in no danger of falling on the hard times that gripped many former slave owners in the decades after emancipation (Dooling, 1999: 220). Leipoldt's Valley utopia is exactly that because it resists history. Whereas in reality the loss of slave labour was heavily felt in the Colony, Leipoldt's established families suffer no such crisis. Nolte is able to enter the Valley years after emancipation and through inheritance, the other mechanism that played an enormous part in the establishment of this privileged class, is afforded the opportunity to establish his own farm, which he does very successfully at a time (the 1840s) in which these occurrences increasingly became the exception rather than the rule. The narrator does soberly draw attention to the fact that not everyone in the Valley was able to prosper when mention is made (briefly, yet again) of the "landless and the herdless Valley-ites" (Leipoldt, 2001: 66) but these struggling farmers are exceptions in the novel.

When Nolte hires the former slave Sylvester, "a half-caste Hottentot with a strong strain of Mozambique blood in him" (Leipoldt, 2001: 18), as one of his farmhands, the narrator again tries to show that while slavery existed in the Valley, it was never inhumane and followed a



system of paternity. Describing Sylvester's wife, Regina, who excels in the kitchen<sup>144</sup>, the narrator puts forth his case:

She too had been a slave, and both she and her husband had that respect for authority and that conception of loyalty which were innate in those who had been brought up under a system of paternal slavery. Everardus knew from personal experience that the lot of the average slave in the Colony had not been a hard or a bitter one, and that senior slaves of the type of his newly found cook and her husband were dependable servants who more than repaid whatever kindness or courtesy their masters showed them. Nor was Sylvester amiss in gauging his new situation. He had been perfectly willing to remain with old master Dorie, but he realized that at *Sandvlei*, where there were older servants who had been with the Oubaas (Old Master) for generations, he would have had to fill a strictly subordinate position, whereas with his new 'Baas', he had a chance of becoming the headman or man-doer of the Native employees. He exerted himself to the full to prove himself worthy of such a position. (Leipoldt, 2001: 18-19)

While it is not the main purpose of this discussion to dispute whether or not slaves were ill-treated in the Cape Colony, it must be emphasised that the abolition of slavery came about partly because of the vehement humanitarian arguments put forth by missionaries (explored in the following section of this chapter) against the abuse of slaves, as well as the very system of slavery – protesting against ill-treatment, missionaries played a vital part in the emancipation of slaves (Ross, 1999: 333). This suggests that the practice of slavery was established firmly enough in the Cape for the missionaries' grievances to be based in fact; in other words, Ordinance 50 was a stand against inhumane treatment, and inhumane treatment was to be found in the Colony's slavery practices, which counter the narrator's claims in the above quote that the 'average' slave had not had a life of hardship and cruelty. Indeed, what is particularly striking in the quote is Sylvester's nods to the near-immovable quality slavery had taken on with mentions of the 'generations' of slaves that had lived on the farm *Sandvlei* and how his knowledge and awareness of the subordinate mentality put him in good stead to be a 'master' figure himself on Nolte's farm, where he'd hoped to be appointed head over other employees. Nicole Devarenne, suggests that it would be easy to accuse Leipoldt of

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<sup>144</sup> Leipoldt's critical writing on food culture in South Africa praises the role of coloured servants in the preparation of authentically South African dishes in ways that white South Africans couldn't lay claim or access to; see Oppelt (2012).

defending slavery in *Gallows Gecko* as a traditional institution (2009: 17). This highlights an uncertainty about the narrator's stance towards slavery.

The notion of paternal slavery, for instance, was actually held as a defence by slave-owners who opposed Ordinance 50, in that "most slaves passed from one generation in a family to the next at the owner's death" (Giliomee, 2003a: 91). This then further connects slavery to the laws of inheritance that helped establish the Cape's landowning elite, which I will discuss later in this section. Paternal slavery took on slaves as the working 'children' to land and slave-owning families:

As a Graaff-Reinet slave-owner remarked in 1826: '[Do] not deprive me of my paternal authority, under which both my children and slaves are happy, and which is necessary for their and my peace.' Slave-owners could not conceive of peace in or outside the house were the paternalistic relationship to be disturbed. (Giliomee, 2003a: 91)

Paternalism was evident even after emancipation, when aggrieved landowners requested that certain servants or unemployed natives in their vicinity be compelled to work (Giliomee, 2003a: 106). The paternalistic tone had much to do with the fact that freed slaves could no longer be forced to stay with their former masters, although "in an acute shortage of labour the cloak of paternalism was often used simply as an excuse for forcing workers to stay" (Giliomee, 2003a: 107).

In *The Decline of the Cape Gentry* (1999), Wayne Dooling connects slavery to the fortunes of a 'landed Cape elite' (Dooling, 2005: 147): a small but prevailing sector of white society in the Cape that had been established as gentry through the success of their farms and their cunning at negotiating laws of inheritance that kept certain families benefitting from their farming enterprises. Again, here we can identify the kind of influential elite described by Perry Anderson (1984: 104). Dooling examines the necessity of slavery for the welfare of these families, and when he discusses how they gradually veered towards insolvency and the loss of their farms he cites the emancipation of slaves (along with a slow progression to modernity) as the most important factor. Also, to Giliomee, "slaves provided a greater facility than any other form of property for raising money on mortgage, and, on the eve of emancipation, were the principal mortgageable assets of the colony" (2003a: 90)

During the twenty-five years before emancipation<sup>145</sup>, at the start of the second and longest period of British governance in the Cape, pro-abolition tendencies were present, so if nothing else, a moral conflict was acknowledged by colonisers. Even before the second British occupation, in the final days of Company rule and the minor period of Batavian rule (1803 – 1806), thoughts about abolishing slavery were being articulated. An example can be found in Giliomee:

Pressure for the abolition of the slave trade had built up in Britain sufficiently for the new British government at the Cape to seek an opinion on ending the importing of slaves into the colony. It turned to Willem Stephanus van Ryneveld, an official who was one of the most progressive thinkers born and bred under company rule, and asked a simple question: could the colony survive without the further importing of slaves? Van Ryneveld recognized that slavery had made the burghers ‘lazy, haughty and brutal’, but argued that it had become a necessary evil, which cannot be removed without sacrificing the Colony and perhaps the poor slaves that are in it.’ Ending slavery would ‘render both the country and these poor creatures themselves miserable, not only all tillage would be at an end, but also the number of freemen, instead of their being (as now) useful members of, would then really become a charge to, society.’ Abolition would lead to ‘the immediate destruction of the entire Colony, and cause misfortune for both free man and slave together.’ (2003a: 93)

The above quote describes how important slavery was to the economy of the Cape Colony during the early nineteenth century. What is notable in the above quote is a ‘progressive’ thinker stating that slaves are useful members of society while in bondage but a threat to that society if freed. Clearly, Van Ryneveld is forewarning of peril threats that overwhelmed white thinking closer to the time of emancipation (and would recur again exactly a century later with the National Party’s “Black Peril” line), but he was also addressing the economic stability of the Colony and its debt to slavery.

The kinds of disputes over slave-ownership between the two white sections in the Cape at the time, regularly alluded to in *Gallows Gecko*, was pronounced in the mid to late 1820s when

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<sup>145</sup> See Giliomee (2003a), p. 90

the pending abolition of slavery in South Africa was announced. The charge of inhumane treatment of slaves on the part of Dutch/Afrikaner slave-owners by English settlers was refuted with counters of English duplicity, and references to England's long-standing history of slave trading (Giliomee, 2003a: 114), and the debate escalated becoming a "struggle between Afrikaner and English colonists for the higher moral ground" (Giliomee, 2003a: 114). This struggle would be echoed decades later during the South African War. The English government would deny legislative government to the Dutch/Afrikaners in this period, thereby preventing them from actively opposing Ordinance 50 and leading the latter to fear the possibility of "slaves embarking on an orgy of revenge leading to a total collapse of the social order" (Giliomee, 2003a: 115).

The attention to this matter in *Gallows Gecko* is found in the novel's philosophical exchanges between characters. Martin Rekker, for instance, comments that the abolition of slavery was "mismanaged, badly. We lost a deal of money over that transaction, but I do not think the government was altogether to blame" (Leipoldt, 2001: 45). While his tone is in keeping with the notable pro-English slant of the novel, Rekker's idea of mismanagement may be a reference to the financial compensation the government tried to effect for former slave-owners, which was not considered by the farmers to have been enough (Dooling, 1999: 219) given the ratio of how much farmers stood to lose without slave labour. Rekker's forgiving stance towards the English government may also be read as an acknowledgement of English efforts to promote racial equality (the creed the missionaries subscribed to) while at the same time trying to remain ameliorative to the Dutch/Afrikaner farmers who were being deprived of their chief labour source. Rekker goes on to discuss the distant possibility (in context of the novel's timeline during this early chapter) of a legislative assembly, which the Dutch/Afrikaner section had clamoured for to prevent emancipation but which would only become a reality by the 1850s:

And any other government would have done much the same,  
but naturally we throw the blame upon the English. We shall  
never get a good government until we have one of our own.  
That time is coming. Already we have some say, and if the  
hotheads will only work and have patience, we will get along  
much better than we will by trekking and complaining.  
(Leipoldt, 2001: 45).

Rekker is obviously predicting the course of events in the novel at this moment, and the ‘hotheads’ would be the unhappy Dutch/Afrikaner section likely to have pro-Voortrekker sympathies. Rekker provides an argument for the growth of the loyalist Cape Afrikaner against the actions of the Voortrekkers—the contestation upon which the novel bases itself. However, even these thoughts have their basis in fact, as the Dutch/Afrikaner section that had opposed emancipation decided to turn its disadvantage to them into an advantage: after slave emancipation in 1838, they began anew in their campaign for representative government (Giliomee, 2003a: 117).

Ordinance 50, however, with its emphasis on non-racial rule did open a door for the eventual Legislative Assembly, but again this was only after more Cape Afrikaners had professed loyalty to the Queen. To that end, emancipation would aid the growth of the Legislative Assembly and its equal colour franchise in the Cape, but at the expense of some of the wealth that helped many Cape Afrikaners acquire their genteel status when the loss of slave labour started taking its toll. Therefore, the Valley world of *Gallows Gecko* presents an aspect of Leipoldt’s approach to contesting history: its focus is squarely on the successful farmers who did not suffer after 1838 – even Nolte, because of his wife’s inheritance, is able to enter the Valley during the 1840s and successfully start applying himself to farming. Leipoldt’s fictional microsm is still a feasible fulcrum for his debate in that his concentration on a small, landed gentry still incorporates the actuality of servitude, or the fact that some slaves never really left, and stayed with their former masters as wage hands.

The narrator of *Gallows Gecko* also touches on one of the important reasons why farming in the Colony suffered after emancipation:

It was Uncle Dorie, too, who had helped him to get Natives for his farm. Many were needed, and Native labour was by no means abundant, for the wages, paid mostly in kind, were not sufficiently high to tempt those who lazied in the locations or squatted on the farms as hangers-on, doing odd jobs, but chary of engaging themselves for any definite period.  
(Leipoldt, 2001: 18)

Despite the harshness of a criticism like ‘lazied’, the social reality here is one of equal uncertainty for both former slaves and former slave-owners. Emancipation did not wholly

open doors for freed slaves to find independent success away from the farms and former masters they were bound to, and the former masters themselves saw a decrease in labour activity on their farms (Dooling, 1999: 218). Former slave owners had greater difficulty in maintaining their farms without slaves, and the former slaves were disadvantaged as a result of their bondage to find, own and manage their own land.

The last quote from *Gallows Gecko*, above, also draws attention to the difficulty farmers had in securing faithful, consistent servants after emancipation. While the novel's narrator informs us regularly that many former slaves chose to stay with their former masters out of loyalty, the reality was also that entrepreneurial opportunities were few for the manumitted. Many went to live and work at mission stations while others found "makeshift homes on government land on the outskirts of towns and villages" (Giliomee, 2003a: 116). From being slaves, most of those who were bound merely progressed to being paid servants, and with the restraints of slavery no longer a threat, there was a distinct lack of the 'faithful, loyal' servants described in *Gallows Gecko*. Dooling points to documented cases of farmers complaining that their paid labourers were openly inconsistent and untrustworthy, as "what bothered farmers most was the indiscriminate way in which labourers would leave their service" (1999: 221), while emancipation "also allowed the [former] slaves greater leverage in determining the conditions under which they laboured" (1999: 221).

It is problematic, then, for *Gallows Gecko* to sketch a near-Utopia that merely seems to perpetuate the wrongs of the past: the Valley's main characters all have cheerful, loyal servants who attach themselves as kin to their employers. They are the segregated audience in the beach scene when Mabuis plays his flute, they are the cooks, the wagon-pullers, the ones who help with the tilling of the soil and the upkeep of many of the showpiece farms, yet they are reduced to cameo, sentimental, often comic and mawkish speaking parts although they are present throughout the novel. They are usually regarded as children by their employers, which brings back the paternalistic tone of slavery and they fill a fixed, lowly place in the social order. This contradicts Leipoldt's argument throughout the *Valley* trilogy for equal race relations, and to me it seems the contradiction is too obvious.

According to Dooling, slaves played a more than significant role in establishing Cape gentry (2005: 147), so much so that the leading elite was almost exclusively made up of slave-owners, a legacy of the eighteenth century farm settlements. Combined with particular

approaches to laws of inheritance through the second half of the eighteenth century, the landed Cape elite could boast of relative comfort up to the point of slave emancipation.

In *Gallows Gecko*, the French Huguenot descendant Mabuis wanders, penniless, into the Valley and later he becomes the suitor for the Valley's most famous widow, the wealthy Cornelia Priem, regarded by the locals as something of a queen figure and notoriously hard to the men who have tried to marry her after the loss of her first husband.

The romance between Mabuis and Priem ties up the latter stages of the novel's plot, but it also sheds light on the importance of women in the securing of family farms, and how often widows were crucial to inheritance and retention practices, as another Dooling study, *The Making of a Colonial Elite* (2005) finds. While Dooling examines examples of how effectively widowhood guaranteed farm retention in various parts of the Western Cape, his findings are applicable to the Clanwilliam of *Gallows Gecko* too, especially pertaining to the focus on Mabuis marrying into Priem's fortune. According to Dooling, widows of established farm owners in the Western Cape during the latter part of the eighteenth century and early part of the nineteenth century often aided the family's claim to a farm after the death of the farmer, thereby ensuring what Dooling describes as "landed stability" (2005:11). Widowed landowners also managed to retain the number of slaves bound to a farm even upon remarriage, thereby maintaining the wealth of some Colony farms. Women were often younger than their spouses and "widowhood was virtually guaranteed in the life-cycle of a large number of settler women" (2005:11).

Although most likely created more to serve a comedic role, the widow Priem is another of the novel's 'landed elite' characters for which the narrator reserves the same superlative descriptions afforded the others of this type: she is yet another example of the narrator's interest in the 'best' representatives of the Valley, a female counterpart to Martin Rekker and Charles Quakerley. She is described as an "institution and a pride" (Leipoldt, 2001: 138) to the Valley, respected for being a woman farm owner able to stand alongside her male peers. Continuing another trend evident in the novel with the back-stories to Rekker and Quakerley, Priem is acknowledged to have had owned slaves who elected to remain with her after emancipation (2001: 137) due to her generosity, fairness and loyalty to them (2001: 138). Her farm, Langvlei, is a showpiece farm almost directly attributed to her wealth and hard work: she has inherited a system of landed stability, and that stability owed much to slavery.



Dooling's argument is that the legacy of property both landed and human up to slave emancipation enabled the 'landed elite' to remain at the forefront of power and socio-economic stability in their regions: many of the men who married into wealth later occupied political positions in their districts (Dooling, 2005: 14) and were seen as leader figures, even if they had little wealth to show before marrying into fortune. Pierre Mabuis is a poor gypsy given some respectability by Nolte's hiring him as the Valley's school teacher, but his marriage to Priem undoubtedly inflates his reputation. In Leipoldt's construction, Mabuis marrying Priem most likely does echo similar real-life events that took place in the Hantam region, and the novel's narrator, as mentioned above, has to acknowledge that slavery played a part in Priem's wealth. Like Nolte's wife, she was born to wealth and came with an impressive dowry to her first husband (Leipoldt, 2001: 137), enabling him (and later, of course, Mabuis) to establish himself largely based on her wealth, much as Nolte is able to enter the Valley through his wife's inheritance of a small fortune from a deceased relative. Priem, at the point where we first encounter her in the novel, may no longer be a slave owner, but we are reminded that her loyal servants were once her slaves, and their labour is still everywhere to be found on her farm.

Thus far, I have examined how Leipoldt uses the role of marriages in farm ownership and carries the idea almost intact to show how Mabuis comes into his fortune and establishes his own dynasty in the Valley. It is seemingly Leipoldt's happy insertion of a true cosmopolitan to the Valley community, one who could doubtless stay and further disseminate his generous and unbiased views to those around him. Marrying Priem is the device that enables this, even though Priem's wealth is rooted partially in slavery, and we may speculate that Leipoldt is trying to use these negative origins of Priem's wealth to positive future conjecture, as surely it is a joyful occasion to have Mabuis permanently settled in the Valley; it could only bode well for this community. It is perhaps noteworthy, then, that Leipoldt does not proceed to tell exactly that story through the rest of the trilogy. In *Stormwrack*, we are informed that Mabuis' son turned to alcoholism, and that the intended Mabuis-Priem dynasty did not endure as their fortune was lost. In *The Mask*, Mabuis' grandson laments the degeneration of his family, and has gone on to establish his own wealth in another country, no longer seeing South Africa as fit to prosper in. What is striking about this eventual turn of events is that Leipoldt ultimately does let the world of *Gallows Gecko* crumble into the actual turn of history: although the 'landed elite' appear to prosper when others like them are losing their fortunes, eventually they, too, go the way of many other Colony farmers after the abolition of

slavery. This is the darker side to the modernity taking place around the comfortable inner world of the Valley. The events propelling the Valley farmers into modernity turned on the treatment of “non-whites”, both through slavery and the missionaries who fought to end slavery and advance European modernity in the Cape Colony. This is the focus of the next section.

### *The missionary influence*

I come from a missionary family. Hereditarily, if there be anything in heredity, I am of those that can see no specific distinction in the human race and that recognize all mankind as belonging to one family, however diversified by colour, custom or creed its various components may be. One of my great-grandfathers was a missionary. Both my grandfathers were missionaries... From childhood to early adolescence I lived in a missionary atmosphere, imbibed missionary tradition and culture, learned to regard black and white not as different species but as the same race separated by a cleft that in time could, and, as I was told, inevitably would, be bridged by a common civilization... (Leipoldt, 1980a: 144)

The above quote is extracted from Leipoldt’s 1937 memoir, *Bushveld Doctor* (reprinted in 1980), from a chapter called ‘Black and White’. The “common civilization” mentioned at the end of the quote most likely refers to Leipoldt’s positive idea of commonality, of a united South African population that is not divided by racism<sup>146</sup>. While much of this chapter in *Bushveld Doctor* ambitiously aims to describe the history of miscegenation in the rural Transvaal through the nineteenth century, and further tries to explain the scientific and biological differences in race in South Africa, it is this particular quote that emphasises Leipoldt’s broad-minded stance toward race relations. Leipoldt, as seen in the quote, proudly attributes his non-racist ethic to his missionary family, and one of the grandfathers he mentions was undoubtedly fictionalised as the Reverend Uhlman in *Gallows Gecko*, just as his son, Pastor Uhlman in *Stormwrack*, is based on Leipoldt’s father<sup>147</sup>, Christian Friedrich Leipoldt. The missionaries in *Gallows Gecko* are the chief spokespersons for the racially inclusive discussions Leipoldt attempts – they, unlike other characters in the novel wrestling

<sup>146</sup> This idea of commonality is also hinted at in *Gallows Gecko* when Charles Quakerley mentions that South Africans would be united if they had a common grievance, such as England sending its convicted felons not to Australia as a penal colony but instead to South Africa; see Leipoldt (2001), p. 156

<sup>147</sup> See Leipoldt (2001), p. xvi

with themselves on the matter of seeing “non-white” people as equal to white, hold firmly to their belief that the future of South Africa lies with all races. Not only, then, does Leipoldt insert his own voice time and again into the conversations between various characters, he also both draws from his family history and works this into the fiction. Linking this point to the wider argument of the thesis, I argue that Leipoldt’s life story is crucial to understanding his fiction. In the case of *Gallows Gecko*, this life story refers to its own origins in the 1830s and 1840s, with the arrival and settling of Leipoldt’s grandfather in South Africa.

The personal and the political drive the many conversations in *Gallows Gecko*, as can be seen by the similarities between the progenitors of some of the *Valley* trilogy’s dynastic families and Leipoldt’s family history. Reverend Uhlman’s back-story reads that he came to an area ensconced in the mountains over the Valley in the 1830s and founded the Neckerthal mission there, moulding it into an independent Rhenish mission station that chiefly operated with a self-functioning community. Uhlman and his family, with a few other white families, live with the “non-white” inhabitants of Neckerthal and lead them into modest industry, from designating carpentry and masonry duties to deputising coloured officials in the church (Leipoldt, 2001: 36-38, 58). While Uhlman is clearly the leader of this community, acting as the local official as well as schoolmaster, his emphasis at Neckerthal is in handing responsibility to this community for their own well-being. Other characters in the Valley admire and respect the mission station and its leader (2001: 24, 43), pointing to it as not only a place of friendliness, leisurely retreat and impeccable society, but also as a nearby materials and resources provider for the Valley, especially for the cedarwood tables to be found in most of the Valley homes.

That Uhlman is modelled on Leipoldt’s grandfather is obvious: Reverend Leipoldt, after being ordained in Germany, arrived at Wupperthal, some thirty kilometres over the mountains from Clanwilliam, in 1830 and settled his mission station there, acting as community leader, local official and schoolmaster in the Rhenish missionary tradition (Kannemeyer, 1999: 41), and he stayed there until his death in 1872; the Leipoldt family museum is to this day in Wupperthal, although the church was incorporated into the Moravian missions in the twentieth century. Reverend Leipoldt’s mission station was the first Rhenish mission in South Africa, co-founded with Baron Theobold van Wurmb, one of two other Rhenish missionaries who, along with Reverend Leipoldt, were part of the first deputation of Rhenish missionaries sent to South Africa (Kannemeyer, 1999: 9). Reverend

Leipoldt, a shoe-maker by trade, supervised a similar growth of industry to that which Uhlman oversees in the novel, and is remembered for being a zealous, stringent schoolmaster laying great emphasis on religious conformity as a design for a life free from sin and promoting equality between races, even if his work ethic and expectations of others were decidedly obsessive (Kannemeyer, 1999: 12). Like Uhlman, he raised his eldest son, Leipoldt's father, to follow in his footsteps and had the boy sent to Germany at a young age to pursue his Classical Acts, which in turn saw Christian Friedrich Leipoldt take up official duties in the East (1999: 22-23) for a period.

In his writing for the *Cambridge History of The British Empire* series in the early 1930s, Leipoldt emphasised the prominence of mission stations to South African history:

Their importance... is obvious to anyone who wishes to understand the psychological causes of some of the outstanding events and some of the isolated incidents in the history of South Africa...  
(Leipoldt, 1936: 849)

Leipoldt's choosing to juxtapose the "outstanding events" and "isolated incidents" indicates the level of priority he felt the role of missionaries in nineteenth century South Africa should be afforded by scholarly study. Leipoldt's Cambridge essay explores the role of the church as a binding social force in seventeenth and eighteenth century South Africa, tracing the establishment of small, informal congregations in the Cape in the 1650s, led by handfuls of ministers and "sick-comforters" (otherwise known as "consolers of the sick") who gave scattered, arbitrary church services at best but nonetheless held a link to the Dutch Reformed Church of Holland (Leipoldt, 1936: 845). From Amsterdam, newly-ordained ministers were sent to the East as officials of the Dutch East India Company, and only those who had completed this service were eventually sent to the Cape (1936: 845). Leipoldt claims that the "educational standard for an aspirant to the ministry was high" (1936: 845) and strong, top-heavy approval ratings needed to be met before a minister could be sent to the Company's outposts (1936: 845), leading to the "sick-comforters" being the Cape's most visible religious leaders for a period after Van Riebeeck's landing in 1652, in spite of severe limitations: they were not authorised to administer the sacraments (1936: 845). As the growth of church congregations led by highly qualified ministers was slow, Leipoldt states in his essay that "at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the cultural state of the colony was still primitive"

(1936: 847), meaning that the church was the greatest influence of what visible cultural development there was (1936: 847), and the church leader played a pivotal role:

The pastor was the one centre of cultural influence in the village.  
He was usually a cultured man, who had received a university  
education in Holland, a good classical scholar... and a man of  
broad human sympathy and a liberal outlook... (1936: 847)

Leipoldt's characterisation of religious leaders in the *Valley* trilogy follows largely the traits described above, and in *Gallows Gecko* the German missionaries are the ones who most typify this interpretation while in *Stormwrack* it is the Village pastor, Mr Uhlman, son of the German missionary. *Stormwrack* also focuses more on the relationship between the Dutch Reformed Church and English rectory in the Village as part of the novel's concerns with Anglo-Afrikaner relations, and Mr Uhlman figures as Leipoldt's riposte to the 'type' of preacher emerging with the dawning Afrikaner nationalism at the turn of the twentieth century, the zealous church authorities that brought religion and politics together (Begg, 2011: 156).

It should also be noted that Reverend Leipoldt was a contemporary of the controversial James Read and John Philip, sent to South Africa during the first half of the nineteenth century by the London Missionary Society (L.M.S.), of which Philip, for a while, served as superintendent. There was political aggression associated with these two figures in their grievances with the Colonial government's treatment of the Khoi people and their role in influencing Ordinance 50, but Robert Ross (1999: 1) also discusses how these two figures, as well as colleagues who endorsed their views, tried to bring their communities closer to the Colonial government's principles of respectability through conversion that would bring with it "temporal advantages, both in terms of material process and the granting of civil rights" (Ross, 1999: 1) in the wake of Ordinance 50. While Read and Philip were English missionaries and Reverend Leipoldt was a German, they were bound to somewhat universal codes of missionary work regarding all men being equal before the eyes of God. Certainly, the fiery Read and his sympathetic colleagues took their passion for the Khoi people to levels that scandalised the L.M.S. when Read took a Khoi wife and expressed a distrust of white peoples, and he and some of his colleagues were linked to sex scandals and miscegenation within the church (Rutz, 2008: 110). Despite this, he is commonly remembered for his

unbending stress on racial parity during the early to mid-1800s, when “there was no more consistent advocate of African rights in all of South Africa” (Rutz, 2008: 110).

Reverend Leipoldt’s exact take on race relations is not clear, owing to a lack of biographical information, but his being the founder of the Wupperthal mission station was the stimulus for his grandson creating the character of Uhlman, whose strong liberal views and promotion of “respectability” continue through his son in *Stormwrack*. While the Uhlmans have major roles in both *Gallows Gecko* and *Stormwrack*, there is even greater praise reserved for the Reverend Von Bergmann, Uhlman’s colleague and the leader of the mission station at Genadendal, in *Gallows Gecko*. In reality, the Moravian mission station at Genadendal was South Africa’s oldest and most famous, what Ross describes as “the model for the Protestant mission station...both the first and the exemplar for its many successors” (1999: 5). Von Bergman is the leading cosmopolitan figure in the novel, one who regularly loses his temper in serious discussions about the socio-political future of South Africa. He is equal parts James Read and C. Louis Leipoldt himself, and his fictional attachment to the Moravian brotherhood, characterised by its nineteenth and twentieth century resistance to wholesale assimilation into the communities of the Dutch Reformed Church (1999: 5), gives Leipoldt the opportunity to construct rhetorical arguments in which his own voice is very clear, and is supported by the reputation of the Moravian as well as Rhenish missionaries. An early moment in *Gallows Gecko* finds Nolte debating matters of race with Uhlman and Von Bergmann. Questioned about the reason he and Uhlman are about to send their male children away to Germany, Von Bergmann replies:

‘You have asked me... why we think it imperative for them to go...  
In this fine country of ours... we have nothing as yet of that which  
spurs a man on to self-sacrifice, to duty... tradition. We are young,  
and we are, or we imagine ourselves to be, superior to those other  
fellow citizens of ours whose skins are not the colour of ours. We,  
who are old, who are able to judge, to discriminate, and to know  
that a man’s nobility resides not in his skin but in his soul, we can  
on occasion discount much. But the young child, brought up in such  
an environment as ours, does not learn to do so. He grows up... with  
a pride of caste that is as detrimental to his spiritual and intellectual  
outlook as it will be ultimately inimical to his social and economic  
interests...’ (Leipoldt, 2001: 37-38)

Von Bergmann's argument for the ability to compare civilisation and cultures between countries (as well as the disregard of sentimentality) will become a motif in *The Mask*, and, again, the emphasis on personal, as opposed to mass cultural salvation is repeated a few times in *Gallows Gecko*. Those who did not work on their own salvation, those who would create legacies that future generations would inherit, the novel reminds us, are the Voortrekkers, and Von Bergmann is especially concerned with the Voortrekker influence on young people:

‘I fear that if our children stayed here, they will learn to do as these men did, forgetting their traditions. How can it be otherwise? We shall inevitably degenerate unless we guard what we have. And are we guarding it? No... no!’ (2001: 39)

Von Bergmann criticises the Valley for having no schools, making the children susceptible to Voortrekker influence – a point touched on later when the Voortrekker agitator charms the younger people in the Valley with his rhetoric (2001: 63). To Von Bergmann, the Voortrekkers abdicated responsibility by leaving the Cape, and he fears that this will encourage the young Valley folk to do the same as there are no minors in the Valley with a sound education (apart from the Seldon children). There is, in his argument, a fear that the unschooled Valley children will absorb the sentiment and emotion of the Great Trek and be inclined to Nationalist/Republican thinking in the coming years. Through Von Bergmann, the novel reveals the resistance to Afrikaner nationalism that continues in the other two novels. He is the first of the major characters to offer outspoken political commentary.

Von Bergmann, later in the novel, makes a strong case for the education of “non-whites”, especially because of the Legislative Assembly and its controversial non-racial franchise, but his greater concern is for white children who will degenerate and, in terms of Leipoldt's fictional outline, become the poor, uneducated whites of the 1920s whose vote helped bring the National Party to power. Discussing the burgeoning establishment of white Republican rule following the Great Trek, Von Bergmann states that white children, and not “non-white” children, are in a position of danger:

‘What is wrong with you? Why, man, open your eyes... What schools have you got in the Valley? How many of you there can read and



write? How many of you have even the shadow of some culture? ...  
Let me tell you, in my own District I have started schools, not for the Natives, though they have theirs, right enough, but for the White children. Why don't you do that in the Valley? You are not poor. You all make a fair living out of your farms. Compare any of your children with *Meneer* Seldon's boy... But what will Seldon's grandchildren be like if you do not guard what you have got? That is why we send our children overseas, *Meneer* Nolte.' (2001: 39)

In *Cultural Development*, there is a similar fear and Leipoldt's argument in the essay is centred on the Afrikaans language trying to position itself, in South Africa, as more important than English on the basis of political agitation, which, again, is a concern dramatised in *The Mask*, where the language war is also a race and social war. The issue of a poor education is again emphasised in the above quote as linked to degeneration, and his unflattering comparison between the Seldon children and other Valley children is echoed in Leipoldt's essay, when he discusses Anglo-Dutch/Afrikaner relations in the nineteenth century:

For half a century and more even the Dutch-speaking child learned the rudiments of the recognized official language [English], acquired at least the salient dates in English history, and his mind became tinged with a culture that, if it was not alien, was at any rate not home-grown. The English child had much less incentive, for the cultural appeal of his own tradition, language and custom, all securely entrenched, was less direct and far less forcible. He did indeed, if he happened to be a first-generation child, learn from his English parent 'To call old England, Home', but in the second and third generation that knowledge meant comparatively little to him; the direct contact between him and the homeland culture became weakened by intermarriage and by the influence of social and other factors; in the fourth generation it hardly existed.  
(Leipoldt, 1936: 861)

The concerns with degeneration are directed more to the Dutch-Afrikaners in the *Valley* trilogy, but Von Bergmann's fears seem to hold for both white sections:

'At present we are letting the children degenerate, and at the same time allowing them to imagine that just because they

are White, they will be all right in the future. That is a sin,  
and a shame, *Meneer Nolte*. Nature revenges herself for our  
neglect.... Often that punishment does not fall upon us who are  
stupid but on our own descendants who have not really  
merited it, to the fourth and fifth generation as the Bible says.’  
(Leipoldt, 2001: 40)

That there is something of an internal conversation between the author and his characters is also hinted at when Nolte charges Von Bergmann and Uhlman as being troublemakers, citing that missionaries were usually troublemakers. Here, it seems Leipoldt anticipates a critical retort to his regular ‘apostle-of-the-opposite-view’ stance, and he sides with the history of European missionaries in the early to mid-nineteenth century Cape. Alluding to the part missionaries played in the abolition of slavery, they surely were regarded with some disdain by the settlers who were reluctant to let go of their slaves. John Philip was “one of the most notorious figures in South African history, because he was seen to be a churchman meddling in politics” (Ross, 1999: 336), and he considered himself a scholar of Scottish Enlightenment, modelling his criticism of the slave trade on Adam Smith’s philosophies, opposing the restraints of freedom for all men and women in the marketplace (1999: 336) and using this as a motivation for his support of the Cape Legislative Assembly. Preceding Philip, Johannes van der Kemp and James Read established the Bethelsdorp mission station near Port Elizabeth as a site of resistance against the slave trade, and between 1806, shortly after the British re-occupation of the Cape and 1811, the year Van der Kemp died, the two had made significant inroads (and many enemies among white farmers) to bringing the support of British law to support slaves (Wells, 2000: 143) in gaining their human rights and ultimately, their freedom.

While Van der Kemp, Read and Philip all worked for the L.M.S., they pioneered a path that Leipoldt’s Rhenish heroic figure, Uhlman, would follow. Robert Ross discusses the history of Bethelsdorp as not only a stronghold for Read’s fierce stance against slavery and his championing of Khoi rights, but also as a mission that prided itself on respectability. It was here that Read and Philip emphasised that the Khoi population was part of the British Empire and as such were citizens of this Empire, and by 1830, Philip could visit the station and witness the celebrations of the enactment of Ordinance 50 – according to Ross, these celebrations saw shows of British, ‘civilised’ ceremony (bearing in mind that the term ‘heathen’ was commonly used for such populations), with thanks offered to both the

missionaries and the King of England (1999: 334). It was at this time that Reverend Leipoldt founded Wupperthal and started his ‘civilising’ project with an aim of respectability through the shoe-making factory and the assignment of duties<sup>148</sup>.

There are differences between the views of respectability by the L.M.S. and Leipoldt’s own application of this in *Gallows Gecko*. Whereas Bethelsdorp saw Van der Kemp and Read fight passionately for equal rights between white and black peoples and take their beliefs as far as living as their Khoi followers did in reed houses to distance themselves from European standards of “civilised” living (Wells, 2000: 144), Leipoldt’s argument throughout the *Valley* trilogy is that European enlightenment should be aspired to by all, and this should influence cultural practices. Unlike Van der Kemp and Read, Uhlman is positioned as being a bastion of European cultural influence and his followers are meant to follow his example.<sup>149</sup> In *Gallows Gecko*, there is both the practice of teaching the Neckerthal natives the ways of European culture as well as the resistance to seeing them as complete equals: while Uhlman gives the coloured members of his congregation important responsibilities in his church, he also views them as his “children” (Leipoldt, 2001: 36-37).

Leipoldt places enormous weight on Europe as South Africa’s cultural master throughout the *Valley* trilogy, and with this comes an argument of superiority that is also reflected in *Cultural Development*. In Leipoldt’s thinking, South Africans always fared poorly when compared to the English or the Europeans, and in that he took on at least one of Philip’s views. In spite of his bitter falling out with English for being as guilty of exploiting native labour as their Dutch/Afrikaner counterparts, Philip still formally targeted the latter section:

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<sup>148</sup> There was also a kinship between the real-life missionary stations at Wupperthal and Genadendal, much like the kinship between the Neckerthal and Genadendal mission stations in *Gallows Gecko*. In the twentieth century, when all South African Rhenish mission stations assimilated with the Dutch Reformed Church, Wupperthal joined the Moravian society; see Schubert (2004), ["The Rhenish Mission in South Africa and Namibia"](http://www.german-south-african-resource-page.com/2004/12/16/the-rhenish-mission-in-south-africa-and-namibia/). *German South African Resource Page*, 2004-12-16, retrieved from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rhenish\\_Missionary\\_Society](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rhenish_Missionary_Society)

<sup>149</sup> In Leipoldt’s thinking his missionaries were neither syncretists nor entirely mechanic agents of a larger organisation: they were somewhere in-between the kind of anti-Read, pro-segregationist faction within the L.M.S., and the human rights champions themselves, Van der Kemp, Read and Philip. The anti-Read factions (and such were their numbers that the L.M.S. spent most of the first half of the nineteenth century dealing with internal disputes) held to the thinking that “the L.M.S. had made a firm commitment to bring its activities more closely in line with the fundamentally racist views of British colonial society”, and they “feared any blurring of the lines between European and African and longed for greater conformity to European settler standards of living and values...grounded in a heightened sense of European cultural superiority”; see Wells (2000), pp. 136, 138

He never appealed to the traditions of the colonists or sought their support, but constantly held to them British standards of ‘humanity and justice’. His approach represented a new departure in missionary work. He had little interest in a Gospel message that wanted mainly to save souls and he had no patience with missionary stations that were mere places of refuge or of squalor and sloth. For him the stations had to be showcases of the liberal order, demonstrating ‘civilization and industry’.  
(Giliomee, 2003a: 102)

In *Gallows Gecko*, Uhlman and Von Bergmann may be German, but they are quite pro-Empire, as are most of the main characters, especially Martin Rekker. The mission station at Neckerthal is as important a stratagem as any other in the novel to try and persuade the conflicted Afrikaner, Nolte, into accepting a liberal imagination, and indeed, heeding Von Bergmann’s warning about the fate of the Valley youths, Nolte builds and establishes a school in the Valley. The missionaries seem to keep strongly in line with the tone of pro-English, pro-European arguments against Republicanism. To that end, Leipoldt’s fictional missionaries fulfil their responsibilities yet also go further, not entirely as far as Read, but enough to suggest that Leipoldt feels the missionaries were the ones who could have greatly influenced equal race relations if there had been more outstanding mission stations like the ones at Bethelsdorp, Genadendal and Wupperthal. However, the internal conflict between especially L.M.S. missionaries in South Africa, largely regarding the life and sway of James Read with the Khoi and Xhosa peoples, saw to it that, in the years leading up to the Cape Legislative Assembly, even the missionaries were segregated (Rutz, 2008: 116), and the likes of Phillip with their commitment to respectability saw more and more “non-white” South Africans being further distanced from respectability in the world outside mission stations (Ross, 1999: 345).

Leipoldt has a saddened Uhlman look ahead to such events with complaints against notions of white superiority:

‘There is a field here, not among the heathen, perhaps, for all these men and women among whom we work have heard the gospel, but among people whom we may help. I consider that is our primary duty, to help... but the people, the White people, in the Valley—

often think that we are doing more harm than good... In the Valley... there are few folk who have seen anything even of this country, and much less of the world outside... We affect to despise those whom we think lower than we are. We lack the virtue of humility, and without that there can be no greatness.' (Leipoldt, 2001: 58-59)

That the missionaries are doing greater work in fighting race segregation than the local parsons is clear when Leipoldt shows even the esteemed Valley cleric, Reverend de Smee (an otherwise forward-thinking character who at one point boldly gives a pardon to a scandalous nude sketch), falling into a trap of alienating others later in the novel, in a conversation with Nolte and Charles Quakerley where he uses the possessive 'our' when mentioning the Valley's Dutch/Afrikaners against the English settlers. Unflattering comparisons between local church clerics and foreign missionaries abound throughout the trilogy: Uhlman discusses the importance of acquiring Hebrew, Latin and Syriac to missionaries in training (Leipoldt, 2001: 61), which Pierre Mabuis in *The Mask* remembers and holds to Santa as an example of the superiority of a classical education obtained in Europe, and in *Stormwrack* a church deputation viciously silences the violin playing of Pastor Uhlman. Local churchmen in the trilogy (although more obvious in the third novel) figure as members of the Dutch Reformed Church, posited as an antagonistic force to the missionary spirit due to its involvement in nationalist Afrikaner politics that included racist views (Omer-Cooper, 1994: 176). In one astounding moment in *Gallows Gecko*, Von Bergmann claims that missionaries are "abnormal...inasmuch as we have an obsession to interfere with other people's business, even with God's" (Leipoldt, 2001: 41). As the timeline of *Gallows Gecko*'s plot in the later stages nears the coming of the Cape Legislative Assembly, Nolte pays Von Bergmann a visit at Genadendal to discuss the issue of the lowered franchise that enables a "non-white" vote that troubles Nolte and other Valley-ites. The German missionary fully comes into his own as the novel's most enigmatic campaigner for equal voting rights, and offers Nolte his opinion:

'We are a very small White community, whereas the Natives are numerous... The property qualification is far too low; besides, it is not a true criterion of a man's real value in this country—no, not even of a White man's real value. I make no distinction between race or colour, but I do make a distinction between moral, economic and social qualities. And I think the franchise should draw such a distinction. You must remember that a child

grows; that the Natives will progress towards civilization, just as we have progressed. I am quite aware that there are people who deny the Native can ever be on the same level with us, but I think they are wrong, quite wrong... I should be untrue to my convictions if I denied to them the right to have some say—however slight at first that share is bound to be—in the management of the political affairs of this country.’ (Leipoldt, 2001: 172)

Nolte touches on the black peril anxiety of the time just before the Legislative Assembly, which was doubtless also a reference on Leipoldt’s part to the 1929 ‘Swart Gevaar’ party line. Nolte’s fear is that “they would overpower us. They are far more numerous than we are...” (Leipoldt, 2001: 172). The anxiety, as mentioned earlier, also existed before and after the abolition of slavery, but Von Bergmann dismisses it immediately:

‘We too can grow as a community... We have the whole of Europe to draw upon... We are a small community of Whites established as lords and guardians of a very large Native community... Our Parliament... cannot be otherwise than a Parliament of the Whites; it cannot claim to be representative of the country. No Parliament can claim to be that unless it represents all the citizens; you must admit that... having abolished slavery, we have tacitly admitted that we are all citizens, and in principle this new constitution endorses that view. But it will take many years, centuries perhaps, *Meneer Nolte*, before the majority of citizens can take their part in ruling the country, and it should be our task to make them competent to do so, by setting them a high example. That the constitution does not do.’ (2001: 172)

Once again sounding more at home in a 1930s South African setting, Nolte gripes that the country belongs to the white man, not to the “natives”, and is admonished by Von Bergmann:

‘I don’t see how you can say that. Rather say that it is ours as much as theirs and then I might agree. I think, if you will pardon my saying so, we are all a little frightened at the idea of sharing this country with others... You will hear a great deal of nonsense talked about patriotism... We represent European civilization here; we represent Christianity, education, economic development, social betterment—all the factors that expedite a nation’s

progress. It is not right that we should say that these factors are for us alone and not for our Native fellow citizens.’ (2001: 173)

Von Bergmann’s words almost channel the speeches of William Porter, the Cape attorney-general, in his championing of the low franchise and colour-equality vote for the forthcoming Assembly in the late 1840s and early 1850s. Realising that South Africa had somehow staved off perilous near-wars between the races during the 1840s (Giliomee & Mbenga, 2008: 143), Porter was “anxious to provide all inhabitants of the Colony with an introduction to political responsibility” (Trapido, 1964: 53) and saw that the white minority was in need of support from the coloured majorities in order to “survive in South Africa” (Giliomee, Mbenga, 2008: 143). Porter was convinced that the Cape Colony’s coloured people were similar to the Dutch/Afrikaner white section in British eyes: “unschooled in parliamentary practice... capable nevertheless of exercising the franchise” (Trapido, 1964: 53). Trapido quotes Porter and then examines his reasoning:

‘White men and Coloured men alike choose members who feel for them, and who will look after their interests, and more knowledge than this I do not look for in the first instance.’ As for those who argued that the Coloureds were politically dangerous, Porter claimed that if this were so, then the best way to disarm them politically would be to give them free opportunity for exercising the franchise, because, he observed, ‘I would rather meet the Hottentot at the hustings voting for his representative, than meet the Hottentot in the wilds with his gun upon his shoulder.’ (1964: 53)

The Cape constitution was passed, in Ross’s words, “with just about the most democratic franchise anywhere in the world at the time” (1999: 345), and the Cape could be described as liberal for at least a thirty-year period. The role of missionaries in the advent of a liberal Cape and its part in the awkward modernity is acknowledged in *Gallows Gecko*. Elements of the actual course of history are synthesised within the novel, and there is a warm tribute generally offered by the novel to the shaping role missionaries had in bringing European enlightenment ideas and in trying to achieve a sense of social upliftment in their followers. Yet, following the course of Leipoldt’s trilogy, unequal race relations would not improve, and the missionaries’ efforts were to be undermined by the increased growth of racist policies in the supposedly liberal Cape and the Afrikaner republics. Nolte ends the novel as the newly



elected parliamentary representative for the Valley. On the surface, this would seem to be a positive ending to a novel brimming with enthusiasm with all its utopian descriptions and depictions of a happy community. But it is here where Leipoldt's celebratory counter-history starts to darken and show more agreement with the actual history of the Cape: racism only worsened as the nineteenth century continued, and it would have been a feat to find tolerant communities anywhere, no matter how small or isolated. In *The Mask*, Maria Vantloo remembers that she'd heard, as a girl, of the liberal and open-minded Gallows-Gecko Nolte (Leipoldt, 2001: 590-591), "with his fine sense of humour, his sturdy loyalty, and his passionate nationalism excluding no section, limiting itself to no creed or persuasion". Perhaps hearsay altered Nolte's character, or perhaps he experienced a complete turnaround of his generally negative views of race that are apparent throughout *Gallows Gecko*, but the Nolte in Maria's thinking is not the Nolte we encountered, who leaves us guessing whether or not he takes with him to parliament the views of his missionary friends.

The alternative history of the *Valley* trilogy commences at a good place – the undisturbed Valley – but the "good place" itself benefitted from slavery even before the events of the novel. The insistent tone of Reverend Von Bergmann as he passionately makes a case for a democratic South Africa falls on deaf ears because Nolte does not seem to be able to realise a vision for a democratic South Africa. With him, the time of possibility represented by the nineteenth century gets lost. By the time of *Stormwrack*, in the 1890s, possibility has been lost. Cape tradition is under threat in *Stormwrack* as more and more strangers enter the Valley. Like Nolte, they will also prove to not listen and comprehend arguments for a democratic South Africa. The loss of possibility and tradition is allegorically depicted in the South African War that separates the Valley community, and ushers in the twentieth century.

## CHAPTER 5: STORMWRACK

In this chapter, I will argue that *Stormwrack* is the key novel of the *Valley* trilogy. As such, it features Leipoldt's depiction of the defining event of the near one hundred year period which the trilogy examines, namely the South African War. The anti-national stance taken by the trilogy is motivated by the focus on the war in the novel.

In this introduction I will, firstly, briefly discuss the dominant argument of the chapter, summarising its main points and how I intend to explore them. This will be followed by a short section discussing the style of the novel before I begin the argument proper. I will also include a background section detailing the importance of the South African War as a regular topic in Leipoldt's writing career.

My core argument in this chapter is that *Stormwrack* is a novel that looks at the psychological impact of modernity on the white South African microcosm represented by characters in the novel. I suggest that there are three components to the modernity of the period setting of the novel, which is from the mid-1890s to 1902. The modernity discussed here is a social and cultural one, as well as a political one (with a brief reference to an economic modernity later). In the world presented in *Stormwrack*, significant elements of real-life social, cultural and political discussions relevant to the place and period (the Cape Colony in the last quarter of the nineteenth century) are present. The first of the three components of modernity I suggest is the social study of Cape Afrikaners offered in the novel, and this social study also takes in political and economic components. The Cape Afrikaner characters in *Stormwrack* are shown to be in constant dialogue about their own way of life, and this includes their loyalty to the colonial government and the queen, their opinions on private and commercial farming and their relationship with Republican Afrikaners. The latter point is the one most strongly emphasized in the novel. Throughout the narrative, mention is made of the differences and similarities between Cape Afrikaners and Republican Afrikaners and the overall suggestion is that a mixed relationship exists between the two groups. Blood ties and sympathetic views on topics of national and cultural independence for the Republican Afrikaners characterise many of the Cape Afrikaner characters in the novel. This was mostly the case in real life (Begg, 2011: 136). However, the novel also highlights important areas of difference and

disagreement between some Cape Afrikaners and Republican Afrikaners. Some of these points were also intertwined with topics on which there was agreement regarding national and cultural independence). This suggests a tenuous state of affairs between the two Afrikaner groups in the novel: something that is complex and delicately poised. The South African War, in the novel, negatively influences this relationship. The world of the Cape Afrikaners before the war, in history and in the novel, is one of a slow but steady embrace of political and social modernity, exemplified by the confidence shown in the Bond Party which protected the Cape farming interests. Cape farming, mostly wine and wheat farming, advanced the economy of the Cape, thereby facilitating an economic modernity as well as a political one (Giliomee, 1987: 40, 59-63). The war is shown, in the novel, to change the co-ordinates of life in the Cape significantly and influence its passage into the twentieth century.

A cultural modernity I look at in this chapter involves the topics of heritage and ornamentalism. Somewhat more complex than the study of the Cape Afrikaners, this chapter's focus on heritage and ornamentalism revolves around the garden belonging to Andrew Quakerley that is mentioned throughout the novel, and that becomes the stormwrack of the novel's title at the end. I argue that the garden is a space for a private replication of the nineteenth century heritage project in England that was most famously connected to John Ruskin and his lobbying for national preservation societies that resulted in the National Trust. The heritage argument, in England, was decidedly anti-modern, emerging significantly during the mid-nineteenth century as a protest against industrialisation and modernisation in England. These protests called for a return to an older, feudal England that could be revived or perpetuated in the national memory through vernacular appeal. The 'vernacular' was mostly to be found in the designing of houses and buildings that harked back to pre-industrial times and, crucially, the preservation of flora and fauna and the cultivation of gardens as a symbol of the pre-industrial. Ironically, colonialism and its influencing role in the modernity of England resulted in the heritage project becoming a tenet of late nineteenth century and early twentieth century modernism. By this I mean that, to repeat an earlier point, modernism is mostly an expression on (rather than exclusively 'of' or 'about') modernity. The power of colonialism meant that variations of the English heritage project could be found in some of England's more prominent colonies, like Australia, New Zealand and South Africa (Merrington, 2006: 3-6). Thus, as much as the heritage project started as being anti-modern, it was through modernity itself that different forms of the heritage project manifested in other countries. These countries had no need to subscribe to an idea of an 'older England' as they

had their own, unique histories, so colonialism's implementation of heritage in these countries was more modern than anti-modern. In South Africa, between the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, this could mostly be seen in architecture, with the work of Sir Herbert Baker prominent. In *Stormwrack* the variant, as I call it, of the heritage project can be seen in Andrew Quakerley's garden. Born to an English family but resident in the Cape all his life, Andrew is described in the novel as a true colonial, born to an English aristocracy but with Republican Afrikaner relatives. His garden is his private, selfish indulgence, but it is a celebrated, famous showpiece befitting comparisons with the best of Ruskin's ideals of cultivated beauty. The garden comes to represent a space for the potential of growth and harmony between the sides at war in the novel. This I find to be a modernist interest (Merrington, 2006: 686), and the destruction of the garden towards the end of the war, representing the impossibility of this harmony, becomes intriguing on two further counts. Firstly, the period setting of the novel presages the Unification of South Africa in 1910, when the English heritage project was launched on a massive scale but ultimately could be said to have been divisive to the Afrikaner half of the Union that had heritage concerns of its own. Secondly, the failure of cultural harmony and growth, as presented by the destruction of the garden, is a topic Leipoldt had already suggested in his debut collection of poetry in 1911, *Oom Gert Vertel en Ander Gedigte*. In that collection, there is a curious relationship between the psychological after-effects of war on the individual, the individual's estrangement in modern cityscapes and both individual and mass memories of transcendental natural scenery as an escape from post-war trauma. In some ways, and as some have already pointed out (Kannemeyer, in Leipoldt, 1990), Leipoldt's debut collection was possibly the first modern Afrikaans literature. The themes I have briefly identified as prevalent in that collection continue in different forms in *Stormwrack* that, I will argue, add to the overarching ambition of this thesis – namely, seeing Leipoldt's work as modernist.

The South African War itself is the third modernity that I will discuss. I have already introduced how this chapter will look at the novel's depiction of the influence the war had on social, cultural and political matters. Following on from the summarising description of Leipoldt's debut collection of poetry I offered above, I will also look at the how the war is shown, in the novel, to be a force of change. A basic understanding of modernity is that it is the phenomenon of change, of constant change that is endless. Applied to the story of countries, modernity is the element that details (and perhaps dictates) how a country "catches up" to other countries in terms of development and progress, no matter how uneven the

processes or how broad the definitions and understandings. In *Stormwrack*, the South African War is the force of modernity that pulls the microcosm of South Africa into the twentieth century, immediately dispensing with beliefs and practices that characterised the nineteenth century. It is a depiction of violent change, yet the novel's concentration on the psychology of the characters rather than the action of the war likens it to numerous examples of western modernist literature of the 1920s and 1930s. The literary representation of this violent modernity, I argue, is what supports *Stormwrack* as a modernist text.

### ***Nationalism***

The focus on *Stormwrack*'s depiction of Cape Afrikaners and on how Andrew Quakerley's garden ties into national English consciousness also includes a discussion on nationalism. In the introduction to this thesis, I claimed that the *Valley* trilogy was written to counter the dominant nationalist Afrikaner ideologies of Leipoldt's time. The focus on emerging Afrikaner nationalism and how it clashes with English national consciousness and ideas of nationhood is a dominant one in *Stormwrack*. From the earliest chapters, prominent characters like Quakerley, Mance-Bisley, Storam, Rekker and Uhlman are seen to be discussing or debating their views on two different kinds of nationalist discourse.

The novel starts in 1895, very soon before the Jameson Raid, in which an offensive was launched on Republican territory by an Englishman, Dr Leander-Starr Jameson, a close friend of Cecil John Rhodes. The intended siege failed abysmally and upset an already uneasy relationship between the colonial government and the republics. Rather than rushing immediately to focusing on the war, *Stormwrack*'s narrative pays close attention to the social and political implications the Jameson Raid had on the Valley inhabitants between 1896 and the start of the war. In this narrative focus, the prominent characters are all concerned with topics that speak to emerging Afrikaner nationalism in South Africa and the antagonism it shares with English governance at the Cape. Within the first few chapters of *Stormwrack*, English national artefacts are prevalent: there is the presence of a schoolmaster keen on training Village boys as cricketers, a description of the Village as likened to provincial areas in England, the main church (at which the schoolmaster is also the rector) and, of course, the magnificent garden.

Afrikaner nationalism is mostly discussed by characters like Rekker and Storam as something emerging from the republics, yet that has some influence on Cape Afrikaners by way of

familial links. Tensions emanating from the republics are shown in the novel to infiltrate the Valley through these discussions. The late nineteenth century saw an ideological clash between English colonial expansion and Afrikaner insularity (Begg, 2011: 137) in that the gold mining boom in the Transvaal attracted great foreign interest from England, Europe and America. The gold mining industry actually depended on these more skilled and experienced foreigners, as, by comparison, Republican Afrikaners were generally poorly skilled at mining activity and slow to adopt systems of modern capitalism (Begg, 2011: 129). The tension between the Republican Afrikaners wanting to keep Transvaal as their autonomous territory while at the same time having to concede to the international capitalist interest in the gold mines manifested itself as an Afrikaner-English tension. The English brought social change to the republics that were not accepted by the Republicans and this caused further tension, along with the speculation that the English wanted control of the Republican gold (Nasson, 2010: 54) and were willing to go to war for it.

Modernity and nationalism begin to work more closely in 1890s South African history. To the English, emerging Afrikaner nationalism was not a threat even in the period leading to the war (2010: 43) but because of humiliating, lost military campaigns by the English against the Zulu and against the Afrikaners in the 1870s and 1880s (2010: 42), a sense of national pride may have been at stake. A war with the Boers would most likely have held more potential advantages than disadvantages for England, as it had the opportunity to gain control of the Transvaal if it managed to crush a small foe with the world's mightiest military force. After the 1880s, a time of European countries "scrambling" to occupy African territories, a foothold in the Transvaal would have been desirable for the English (Begg, 2011: 137). These and other 'in-the-air' topics are mentioned by the prominent characters in *Stormwrack* after the Jameson Raid. They also discuss moral issues around national feeling and this discussion naturally changes as different events occur in the Valley.

The Afrikaner nationalism emerging from the republics was at first a hindrance to an Afrikaner embrace of modernity, and then it became the driving force behind the Afrikaner war effort. According to Begg, "the antiquated policies and institutions of the Boer republics, administratively inefficient, inflexible, and sometimes corrupt, were becoming a hindrance to modern commerce" (2011:138). This meant that the kind of economic gain to be realised from the Transvaal was being obstructed for the British by insular Republican thinking, while at the same time keeping Republicans from becoming

fully modern in terms of defending themselves against English aggression. The Jameson Raid, arguably, drew the modernisation process onto a plane of socio-cultural modernity in light of the fact that, from then on, the Republicans readied themselves for war against the English. International outcry against the raid, even from England itself, lent some assistance to the Afrikaner cause as an ‘innocent’, independent Christian state agitated by the colonial government (Nasson, 2010: 51). The Republicans prepared their soldiers for combat and imported the German Mauser rifle, then the most modern weapon in the world, and a “war industry” (2010:71) was pre-planned to the finest detail. In order to fight for their nationalism, which was based on white Africanism, Biblical appropriation and anti-Englishness, the Afrikaners modernised themselves.

With this looming in the background, the Valley characters in *Stormwrack*, between the Raid and the start of the war, engage in questions of nationalism at almost every turn. The complexity of Cape Afrikaner nationalism, which will be discussed later in this section, was mostly associated with the idea of the Cape as being liberal and cosmopolitan. Against the Republican quest to create an independent, white Afrikaans South Africa free from British rule, the Cape Afrikaners were loyal to the colonial government and defined themselves differently to the Republican Afrikaners. The Cape nationalism was more open to British and European influence and its economic and cultural modernities were already so influenced. The English heritage project that was beginning to find an outlet in the Cape towards the end of the nineteenth century was at odds with the Republican vision of South African land belonging to white Afrikaners. However, to further vex the issue, Republican appeals to their Cape brethren in order to foster the idea of a national Afrikaner consciousness did have some success, and the idea of a “political community” (Begg, 2011:133) of all white Afrikaans-speakers had some appeal in the Cape by the time of the Raid. *Stormwrack* shows this influence as divisive in the Village, and the anxiety many characters have of how this divide might show in the war is realised when Cape Afrikaners begin to rebel against the colonial government.

### ***Background***

It is necessary to know some details of Leipoldt’s writing career to inform a reading of *Stormwrack* as a modernist text and to reveal it as the culmination of Leipoldt’s experiences of and writing about the South African War. This background section is necessarily lengthy to emphasize the writing trajectory that Leipoldt followed when his topic was the South



African War. A minor argument I try to make in this section is that Leipoldt's earliest writing about the war reveal him to be a young writer overwhelmed by the modernity of the South African War as it was happening, whereas *Stormwrack* represents a modernist take on the same subject. Between these two representations there is also a gradual move towards the tone and themes of *Stormwrack*. This I locate in early short stories written by Leipoldt, as well as in his debut collection of poetry, although here I confine myself to Leipoldt's journalism.

### ***War journalism***

The Leipoldt otherwise presented in this thesis was one who argued for cultural harmony and the end of racial intolerance, yet as the writer of a series of war correspondence for an Amsterdam-based newspaper in 1900 and 1901 he seems to stoke the fires of both. This curiously atypical side to Leipoldt suggests another opportunity to apply the modernist tag of a 'fragmentary' Leipoldt at the eye of the storm of the modernity that shaped South Africa's twentieth century. In such a reading, Leipoldt bizarrely takes on the characteristics of the kind of fragmentation modernist literature applies itself to: he changes with the times and is often self-contradictory.

Leipoldt's early journalism from 1900 to 1902 reveals a writer positive about the emerging Boer nationalism and dismissive of his own Cape Afrikaner communities. From April 1900 to October 1901, a Leipoldt barely out of his teens wrote as correspondent for a Dutch newspaper, *Het Nieuws van den Dag*.

Leipoldt joined the *South African News*, which was a newspaper that had just been established in Cape Town in 1898. His superiors there were the politicians Jan Sauer and John X. Merriman<sup>150</sup>. In October 1899, therefore, he was an active journalist when the South African War broke out and his recollections of that period can be found in *Stormwrack*. For instance, Leipoldt's memory of the Boer ultimatum to the English on 9 October 1899, as well as the delayed reporting of the outbreak of the war, is recreated faithfully in *Stormwrack* (Leipoldt, 2001: 349-350), owing to his journalistic experience at that time. Indeed, as Wium van Zyl finds, much of Leipoldt's fictional material was sourced from his experience as a

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<sup>150</sup> Merriman was an Englishman who had won the support of the Bond Party, and had turned his back on Rhodes. He acted as Treasurer General of the Cape (1898-1900) and later became the eleventh Prime Minister of the Cape Colony.

journalist (van Zyl, 2002: 15). The most famous examples remain the poems in *Oom Gert Vertel en Ander Gedigte*, in which many of the poems, he claimed in his foreword, were composed during the war. *Stormwrack* also benefits greatly from Leipoldt's experience of the war as a reporter as well as his knowledge of Clanwilliam. His war correspondence shows events and situations that would be reworked in his fiction.

Leipoldt the youthful reporter could only be described as pro-Boer. As much as the older Leipoldt seemed to eschew picking a side when discussing the South African War, the younger Leipoldt's journalism is a fierce defence of the Boers. The English press in Cape Town referred to the *South African News* as "that mendacious pro-War rag" and "The dirtiest rag of all pro-Boer press" (Kannemeyer, 1999: 115). Leipoldt therefore worked in a hostile environment and this may have influenced his own, somewhat hostile criticism of the colonial Government and even Cape Afrikaners. By 1900, Leipoldt would be sent on assignment with a circuit court trying the cases of people accused of rebellion by the government. He would also be appointed as war correspondent to the *Manchester Guardian* and the *Daily Express* in Britain, the *Chicago Record* and *Boston Post* in the USA, *Petit Bleu* in Brussels and *Neuste Nachrichten* in Hamburg (1999: 118), a significant boost to his professional profile. His experience with the circuit court, moving through occupied territories around the country, would arguably be the greatest source of his poetry in the *Oom Gert Vertel en Ander Gedigte* collection and his writing in *Stormwrack*. Witnessing the processes of martial law in the court cases and seeing the death penalty enforced in some of these would become the recurring theme in his later work, when Leipoldt showed regular interest in state barbarism and cruelty<sup>151</sup>. The challenging tone of his fiction in the *Valley* trilogy can be found in his journalism in 1900 and 1901, even if the point of view may be different.

Rebellion is the crucial dramatic device behind both the poem *Oom Gert Vertel* and the second half of *Stormwrack*. Common to both, and sourced from Leipoldt's journalism in 1900 and 1901, is the notion that the government was actively creating rebels with its implementation of martial law and treatment of loyal Cape Afrikaners. In *Stormwrack*, the venerable Old Martin Rekker is placed in the town jail on grounds of suspicion because his son was kidnapped by a Boer commando. The military officials disbelieve this and suspect it

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<sup>151</sup> See Burgers (1960)

as a traitorous move on the part of the young Rekker. This shock to the town is further aggravated by intolerant proclamations and ordinances that undermine the spirit of loyalty that had always been there, and from there on the novel focuses on the issue of rebellion. Consider the following question raised by the young Leipoldt in a piece for the *Manchester Guardian* on 12 February 1901:

As to the workings of martial law, one regrets to find that reports are coming in... of such a character that one feels inclined to ask if the military administrators wish to force Dutch colonists into rebellion.  
(Quoted in Kannemeyer, 1999: 123)

Later, based in England to commence his studies in medicine, and just months before the war ended, Leipoldt again looks ahead to *Stormwrack* with a piece in the *Manchester Guardian*, saying that, to the loyalist Cape Afrikaner, martial law means:

... the absolute suppression of the right of free speech or expression of opinion in private or in public... the effacement of all his preconceived notions of English justice and British fairplay; and the total abolition of all sense of security and safety so long as a soldier remains in the district... (Quoted in Kannemeyer, 1999: 165)

In *Stormwrack*, this piece would resurface almost identically in the thoughts of Andrew Quakerley, a similar lament for a loss of tradition (Leipoldt, 2001: 474, 478, 484). The tone in the above quote is not far removed from that of the more sedate and informed Leipoldt at work in the *Valley* trilogy and the Afrikaans newspaper and magazine pieces in the 1920s. Yet, one specific selection of Leipoldt's war-time journalism slightly bedevils a holistic view of Leipoldt and provides some evidence that apart from being pro-human in this time, Leipoldt was most likely pro-Boer. His letters for *Het Nieuws van den Dag* open up this challenge, locating Leipoldt at the start of the twentieth century as a vehement Boer supporter. Readers of these letters were all based in Amsterdam and could not have known that the writer they were following to keep them updated from the Cape was just out of his teenage years. Leipoldt's contributions to the Dutch newspaper lasted roughly eighteen months, from April 1900 to October 1901, and in total anything between thirteen and twenty of his letters may have been published at irregular intervals. In the wake of Kannemeyer's biography of Leipoldt in 1999, the period of re-interest in the poet yielded much, with an

important book being Wium Van Zyl's collection of selected letters by Leipoldt published in *Het Nieuws van den Dag*, titled *Hierdie Land van Leuens* (2002) (This Land of Lies). This title is taken from Leipoldt's writing in one of the letters.

In Van Zyl's introduction to the collection, he mentions the importance of the letters as historical artefact and the challenge they present to accepting a view of Leipoldt as never having chosen sides during the South African War. The Leipoldt apparent in these letters plays to his readership's likely identification with the Boers, and his descriptions of the activities of Boer commandos are often heroic. It is entirely possible that the sense of mischief that typified the older Leipoldt's journalistic output was already at work here. The mischief alluded to is Leipoldt's habit of writing in a familiar, friendly tone to his readers, and regularly using the "ons" possessive to indicate that he identifies himself as an Afrikaner, thereby identifying himself with his largely Afrikaner readers. Of course, in the 1920s, the debate was exactly about what kind of Afrikaner one was, a National Party follower or a South African Party follower, and Leipoldt sometimes deliberately wrote in such a way that made it hard to discern where his loyalty lay, even though it must have been common knowledge to many that he was affiliated to the South African Party. In trying to get his mostly anti-Nationalist/pro-Unity views across in the 1920s, Leipoldt would play the role of the kindly, communal "uncle" figure in many of his articles, in a sense duping his Nationalist readers into following his rhetoric. It is possible, then, that his letters to Amsterdam may be early examples of this tendency in his writing, but the actual content of the letters do not sit well with such a formulation.

As Leipoldt's name did not appear in the letters (Van Zyl, 2002: 7) he could revel in anonymity. It is also likely that Leipoldt, who professed a love for the Dutch language and Dutch culture and was strongly opposed to Afrikaans replacing Dutch as an official language in South Africa, was happy to write professionally in Dutch. He may even have wished to tailor his writing to win chances of further employment, and from there it could be speculated that perhaps he was being sensationalist in these letters. His brief was to provide accurate material about the South African War (2002: 1, 7, 9), and specifically to offer a bird's eye view of conditions and reactions in the Cape. The pro-Boer tone of Leipoldt's letters suited the paper's pro-Boer attitude and suited its strong international ties. The overly opinionated Leipoldt found in these letters, veering between wild guesses and impressive insights is no great surprise to anyone familiar with his work.

The twelve letters in Van Zyl's collection find Leipoldt mostly critical of the English military and the system of martial law, and he is quick to label anyone leaning towards Imperialism as a 'Jingo'. Where the young Leipoldt does show behaviour his older self would completely contrast is on the matter of proudly associating himself with Republican values and actually damning Cape Afrikaners at times. Even if we consider that the narrator of *Stormwrack* seems to both pity and taunt Andrew Quakerley (and others like him) for being passive about the war initially, there is still the general feeling that the Cape Afrikaners suffered at the hands of both English and Republican cruelty. The criticism Cape Afrikaners receive from Leipoldt in the Amsterdam letters sometimes borders on rank indifference. In letter 10, he speaks aggressively about 'Boer Jingo's' (2002: 143). According to Van Zyl, Leipoldt does not hide his pro-Boer attitude and at times it seems he idolises the Republicans (2002: 14), going so far as to compare Cape Afrikaners unfavourably with their Republican counterparts (which is exactly the opposite of what happens in the *Valley* trilogy):

En de Afrikaanders—wat doen zij! Ach, zij zitten stil; leiderloos is er aan geen opstand te denken. Zij geveolen sympathie—diepe, ernstige sympathie uit het binnenste van hun hart—die sterk genoeg is om een paar ponden te geven aan een of ander fonds ten behoeve van de Republikeinsche gevangenen, of der arme, verdrukte vrouwen der strijders, maar zoo zwak dat zij niet waagt beslist te protesteeren en indien nodig het protest op te volgen met daden die aan de wereld kunnen getuigen dat zij werkelijk het onrecht gevoelen dat den Boer is aangedaan en dat zij tevreden zijn met hem te lijden, te worden onderdrukt en veracht, omdat zij voor het recht geleefd en tegen het omrecht gstreken hadden. Maar het is waar onze Koloniale Boer heeft veel te leeren; hij is nog niet zoo ver gevorderd als zijn broeder in Transvaal... (2002: 136)

And the Afrikaners. What do they do! They sit still; without a leader an uprising is unthinkable. They feel sympathy, deep, serious sympathy from the depths of their hearts. Strong enough to donate a few pounds in support of the Republican prisoners or the poor, oppressed wives of the combatants, but so weak that they do not dare protest in a decisive manner and if necessary follow up the protest with actions that would show the world they genuinely feel the injustice done to the Boer and that they are prepared to suffer with him, to be oppressed and despised

because they lived before a law and argued against injustice. But it is true that our Colonial Boer has plenty to learn. He has not yet advanced as far as his brother in the Transvaal.

Even when Leipoldt is shocked by Boers attacking the Cape, he still gives them strong support – even, at times, pouring scorn on Cape Afrikaners (going so far as to call the Afrikaner Bond cowardly, shortly after praising them) who are not prepared to go so far as to take up arms, berating their passivity (2002: 14). This is directly contrasted by the following quote from *Stormwrack*:

‘...what I do not admire, what I very much condemn indeed, is the way in which you led so many poor devils into rebellion...’  
(Leipoldt, 2001: 391)

The feelings expressed by the magistrate at the end of *Stormwrack* are almost entirely contradictory to Leipoldt’s writing in the war letters for *Het Nieuws*. Both are representative of a Cape colonial writer offering dramatic commentary on the same state of affairs, with the difference being the time gap between the two outputs and in the divergent mediums of journalism and prose fiction. The conflict between the young journalist and the older novelist suggests a conflict between a younger writer experiencing violent modernity first hand and a more experienced writer producing a modernist critique both of the war and its consequences.<sup>152</sup>

### ***Style and plot in Stormwrack***

In *Gallows Gecko*, as I have argued in the previous chapter, a seemingly utopian space is described, at least on the surface of that novel’s narrative. In *The Mask*, the setting is South Africa in the 1930s, a world far removed from the one depicted in *Gallows Gecko* if we note the unfavourable ways the narrator compares the world of *The Mask* to the world of *Gallows Gecko*. *Stormwrack* focuses on the shift that occurs in the Valley community, and by extension South Africa, and this shift is effected by the South African War. The war is shown in the novel as a pronounced period of uncertainty, confusion and fear for the Valley community. There is a sense of the war ushering in a disjointed and uncomfortable new era

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<sup>152</sup> This duality is evident in *The Mask*, and in the next chapter I will argue that Leipoldt dramatised his younger and older self in the novel’s two intellectually antagonistic characters, whose arguments provide the sustained polemical episodes in the novel.

for the Valley at the turn of the century. In the novel, the effects of an international war are mostly shown through their impact on the local: the remote Valley community. Therefore, instead of showing scenes of battle, the novel chooses instead to explore the psychological influence of the war on the characters. Most of the skirmishes are reported or discussed after the event and even the climactic battle between Boer commandos and English troops in Andrew Quakerley's garden is heard but not seen, as Andrew is sitting inside his house and hears the battle taking place outside.

Most of the novel's concentration on the characters Andrew Quakerley, Old Martin Rekker, Rector Mance-Bisley, Pastor Uhlman and Magistrate Storam speaks to the trepidation and anxiety these characters feel during the war. Among numerous fears and grievances, they are most perturbed by the social changes which occur as a result of the war. These changes are evident in the Valley community when young Valley folk choose to rebel against the colonial government by taking up arms and joining the Boer commandoes. Even a few years before the war infiltrates the Valley, in the wake of the 1895 Jameson Raid, political unrest among Valley schoolboys is shown in the novel to be a harbinger of things to come. The older characters like Quakerley and Old Martin Rekker mostly lament the gradual erosion of Cape Afrikaner tradition that had, until before the war, typified the Valley community. This tradition is liberal and celebrated as such by these characters that are loyal to the queen. They expound maxims of good neighbourliness between English and Dutch and consider themselves as fair-minded employers of their servants.<sup>153</sup> The novel's modernism emerges in the lengthy passages describing these characters pondering the loss of their tradition, so well sketched in *Gallows Gecko*. The loss of tradition also makes Andrew Quakerley question the England he was bound to by blood and heritage. He is an example of a loyal colonial subject becoming increasingly ambivalent about the English government he had always believed in. The moments in which Andrew begins to question the issue of loyalty mark some of the clearest signs of *Stormwrack's* modernist elements.

Regarding the form of the novel, there are a few points of interest. Naturally, the dynastical element inherited from *Gallows Gecko* is intact and the war setting suggests a novel steeped in conflict and anxiety. Leipoldt engages with later nineteenth century interests in

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<sup>153</sup> The non-racial franchise instituted in 1853 (and a major conversation point in *Gallows Gecko*) is often the common denominator in history books describing the liberal Cape of the nineteenth century. See Giliomee & Mbenga (2008).



consciousness in literature while also striving for nineteenth century realism and falling back on his journalism to sketch the Village and its people as objectively as possible. There is an almost episodic structure at work in the novel that draws on Leipoldt's experience of serialisation and his own tendency to shape his journalistic pieces into a series (Gray, 2000b: 16). As I suggested earlier, Leipoldt also writes into what Kermode describes as the chiliastic effect of the turn of a century, imbuing *Stormwrack* with a sense of foreboding and constant reminders that change is occurring. Narrative attention is largely given to Andrew Quakerley's thoughts to show how gradually his belief systems are brought down by the South African War just as nineteenth century Cape tradition itself, in Leipoldt's view, was being destroyed by this invasive modernity. In this way, *Stormwrack* painstakingly documents a revolution, describing in detail how seismic cultural shifts occur in the Village and portentously returning to the motif of *something* – be it tradition or value systems – being violently lost.

*Stormwrack* dramatises the clash between old and new and Andrew Quakerley is the sacrificial elder who must die to attest that the old century's Victorianism could not continue. There is a sense of chaos, of matters building to a nihilistic conclusion that was to be found in literary thinking in the 1890s in Europe (Bradbury & McFarlane, 1991: 51). Leipoldt furthers his take on Social Darwinism when he returns to his theory of biological degeneration in white South Africans; the exemplary Valley-ites of *Gallows Gecko* are here replaced by less perfect representatives not quite as liberal, physically capable, bold or aristocratic. When Old Martin Rekker in *Stormwrack*, son of the shrewd Martin Rekker of *Gallows Gecko*, is helpless in the face of his son's kidnapping by Boer commandoes and his own arrest under martial law, it is a harbinger of the helplessness Andrew Quakerley will face when a night action is fought in his garden between English troops and Boer commandoes.

The forced attendance of Valley elders at the public execution is sketched as an event that merely inspires greater rebellion. In fact, as older characters are treated disrespectfully by English officials, the novel's other great tragedy lies in the younger characters who, through their own "hot-headedness", are endangering themselves, as they are the future of the community. The death of the half-wit teenager, Org Bons, has the Village community in mourning and inspires further nihilism because his execution was public and because the older character that directly influenced Bons to rebel, Ras, is spared. Ras, like Vantloo in *The Mask*, and the Voortrekker sympathiser in *Gallows Gecko*, is the kind of villain who is

quickly idolised by gullible, sentimental followers. And while this kind of deliberate caricature cannot be wholly appreciated as a valid comment on the fuller spectrum of Afrikaner nationalism in the early twentieth century, especially in the light of English wartime atrocities, it is somehow effective in sustaining the deeper focus on the effects of war on a small community.

The following section in this chapter aims to compare and contrast contemporary histories of the supposed liberal Cape with Leipoldt's fictional casting of it to investigate how Leipoldt's internationalism, a trait regularly associated with modernism, had given him, in Gray's description, something of a "heretical, outsider's position in a land of competing nationalisms" (Gray, 2000b: 7). My argument in the next section draws extensively on the work of two recent historians, Mordechai Tamarkin and Herman Giliomee, in order to identify some of the particular historical narratives Leipoldt engages with in *Stormwrack* to suit the needs of his fiction. In *Stormwrack*, Leipoldt's concentration on how the war affects both English and Afrikaner characters attests to his beliefs that the war was a common heritage for both sides, and a shared experience of the making of twentieth century South Africa.

### ***Stormwrack's depiction of Cape Afrikaners and the loss of liberal tradition***

The impact of both capitalism and imperialism was complex, indeed contradictory. The concurrent thrust of British imperialism had a similar contradictory effect on Cape Afrikaner society. What informed the emergent Cape Afrikaner ethnicconsciousness was neither fully satisfactory integration nor total alienation, but rather a mixture of integration and marginalization. This blend created not only a niche for a particular ethnic identity, but also shaped the content of the evolving ethnic consciousness. The ambiguous nature of the integration and socialization of the Cape Afrikaners into the colonial state was reinforced by concomitant processes of modernisation and social change. (Tamarkin, 1996: 46)

*Stormwrack*, unlike Deneys Reitz's Republican-sided account of the South African War, *Commando* (1929), exclusively focuses on the experience of the Cape Afrikaners before and during the war. Against the overt, heroic depiction of Republican Afrikaners in South African Afrikaans literature at the time, the Cape Afrikaner was a more complex figure to study, as

can be evinced by Pauline Smith's *The Beadle* (1924) and, earlier, Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm* (1883). Leipoldt's regular complaints in his journalism that "northern" politics were dominating Afrikaans literature also fall in line with his upholding of nineteenth century Cape Afrikaner beliefs. Most of these beliefs came from patrician classes and the established elite families that were important leaders in farming communities. Leipoldt was a supporter of the Smuts-led South African Party in the 1920s, even though he openly favoured Smuts' predecessor, Louis Botha, and the fact that both Smuts and Botha were famous Boer leaders during the South African War who were now preaching conciliation between Afrikaner and Englishman adds to the intrigue of *Stormwrack*. It is not simply about one side fighting against another but rather the morally involved, slow-paced tale of one of the revolutionary moments that defined modern South Africa. The novel harks back to Leipoldt's early writing about the war in his short stories *De Rebel* (1901) and *The Rebel* (1904), in which the young Leipoldt first explored the tensions between patriotism and loyalty experienced by the Cape Afrikaners during the war.

The story of the Cape Afrikaners in the nineteenth century seems peaceful and liberal, substantiating assumed ideas in history books that Afrikaners in the Cape were "different" to Afrikaners elsewhere in the country, largely owing to the non-racial franchise<sup>154</sup>. Whereas those who became Republican Afrikaners left the Cape Colony in the 1830s, the Cape Afrikaners stayed, and in staying they were denied the mobility of modernity that the Republican Afrikaners were creating for themselves. The Cape Afrikaners let modernity happen to them, and the process was neither hurried nor urgent. Leipoldt's trilogy locates these subjects, and to an extent measures them against their "moments of modernity": in *Gallows Gecko* he focuses on them through the events of the Great Trek, the dawning of the Cape Legislative Assembly and the establishment of the Republican states and in *The Mask* he examines them in "modern" South Africa of the 1920s, more susceptible to the northern influence than at any point before. *Stormwrack*, at first, studies the frustrating period between the Jameson Raid of late 1895 and the declaration of war in 1899 and the concomitant anxieties and tensions developing in that period before offering harrowing exposition of a Cape Colony community under martial law, something his poem, *Oom Gert Vertel* (1911), could only imply. Despite what at times appears to be a pro-English tone, *Stormwrack* is a

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<sup>154</sup> See Lewsen, P. (1971), p. 72-88 and Giliomee (2003), p. 163. Giliomee argues that representative government and the non-racial franchise were disappointments, as Anglocentrism overwhelmed the Cape Afrikaners and neither English settlers nor Afrikaner farmers were any more amicable to "non-whites".

novel about not being able to choose a side: the characters are thoroughly divided between loyalty to the Crown and blood relatives on the Republican side. It is a study of the effects of the war machine and nationalism on ordinary people included in a history they tried to resist. Leipoldt counts as factors in the Cape Afrikaners' response to the South African War the historical contributors to their make-up: language and the commercial farming enterprise, both influenced by their relationship to the English government and significant in the establishment of the Afrikaner Bond in the 1880s, the first modern Afrikaner party, indeed, the "first modern political party in South Africa" (Giliomee, 2003a: 220), which arose from the earlier farmers' protection organisation, Zuid-Afrikaansche Boeren Beschermings Vereeniging (BBV). For the most part, the Bond was led by Jan Hofmeyr, hailed by many as the most capable politician in South Africa at the time (2003a: 214), and clearly a man much admired by Leipoldt as numerous references in *Stormwrack*, as well as various articles and war correspondence in 1901, can attest to. In fact, Hofmeyr's guiding the BBV to becoming the Bond (Viljoen, 2010: 407) against his erstwhile co-founder of the early farmers' protection groups, S.J. du Toit<sup>155</sup>, shows an example of progressive but pragmatic politics versus aggressive populism, which is another motif Leipoldt expounds in the *Valley* trilogy. In the case of Hofmeyr and Du Toit the twin growths of the business-centred farmers' welfare and the early drive to establish the farmer's language, Afrikaans, are notable as mutual but also exclusive journeys to defining the Cape Afrikaner's patriotism.

A point Leipoldt makes time and again in the trilogy is the development of Afrikaans and its, according to him, inferiority to English in terms of international standing. Throughout the trilogy and in his essay, *Cultural Development*, Leipoldt argues that Afrikaans could not supplant English at any point in the country's history owing to the greater endurance of English as an older, more established language around the world. Leipoldt's argument is supported by Giliomee's finding that in the Cape during the mid-to-late nineteenth century, English settlers generally did not learn Afrikaans, while Dutch or Afrikaans speakers more commonly learned to speak English (Giliomee, 2003a: 172). However, in *Stormwrack*, many of Leipoldt's Dutch and English speaking characters also oppose, as Leipoldt did, the superseding of Dutch by Afrikaans.

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<sup>155</sup> Du Toit was behind the First Afrikaans Language Movement in 1875 and editor of *De Patriot*. He touted the growth of Afrikaans against English but faced the problem of no original body of literature existing in Afrikaans at the time. A fiery proponent of Afrikaans language and culture, his aggressive populism estranged him from the more popular and more respected Hofmeyr. By the late 1890s, Du Toit would famously become a Rhodes supporter.

Afrikaans was considered a language for servants or for the kitchen, even dismissed as such by a character in *The Mask* (Leipoldt, 2001: 644) and implied, in *Stormwrack*, by the description of Mias only speaking Afrikaans to his servants (2001: 316), while reserving Dutch and English for his guests. For all their struggles with Dutch, and High Dutch in particular, Cape Afrikaners were mostly English and Dutch-speaking. Afrikaans, as mentioned before, was for a while a language of solidarity between farmers. The “stigma of a *bastertaal*, or mongrel language” (Giliomee, 2003a: 224) greatly impeded the advances made by the First Language Movement in 1875, rendering Dutch as the still-unchallenged language beside English in the colony.

The language concern is stated by a few characters in the novel, and its ultimate role in twentieth century South African politics is drawn out as a harbinger of future developments in the discussions of these characters. The language concern was one of the factors in what Giliomee (2003a: 172) describes as an inferiority complex Afrikaners had compared to mid-to-late nineteenth century English settlers in the Cape. The troubled definition of the Cape Afrikaner was largely based on the relationship to the English government and, secondary to that, the blood relations to the Republic. For Cape Afrikaners, there seemed to be a mixed approach to both English government and Republicanism in that they were for and against both, respectively.

As the earlier Cape Dutch elite rested on the back of wealth obtained from farming (and the use of slave labour), it was the matter of farming within a growing, capitalist industry that both mobilised and modernised the Cape Afrikaner (Tamarkin, 1996: 45). Rather than resisting the government in the pursuit of defining their ethnic nationalism, the identity of the Cape Afrikaner was attained through careful assimilation with the government and the changes it brought to the agrarian class, in effect the ruling class of the Cape.

The intricate nature of amalgamation and socialisation between Cape Afrikaners is dramatised in *Gallows Gecko* and *Stormwrack* through characters on both the Afrikaner and English sides, and the novels follow their watchful, cautious relationship with the other Valley folk. In *Gallows Gecko*, Nolte is indeed fearful of displeasing the Valley barons and the secret he shelters is a cause of great consternation for him. In *Stormwrack*, a flashback is offered to Rector Mance-Bisley’s early days in the Village, when his outgoing predecessor

had advised him about the “peculiar circumstances of the Valley” (Leipoldt, 2001: 254) and emphasized the need for consolidation. The following quote speaks to the care and attention that needed to be applied by an Englishman in coming to the Valley. The necessary respect for the lifestyle of the Village folk, comprised of English and Dutch-speakers, is being emphasized here:

‘My dear fellow’, he had told Mance-Bisley... ‘You will find that people will take you just as you wish them to take you. If you are high and mighty, they will treat you in the same way. If you show them that you despise them—their want of culture, their language and their local conventions may not seem, at first, all they should be to you—they will despise you.’ (Leipoldt, 2001: 254).

Apart from his overt championing of Hofmeyr and what he stood for even as far as his writing in the 1940s<sup>156</sup>, Leipoldt’s depiction of the Valley folk, until midway through *Stormwrack*, shows the influence of Hofmeyr’s Bond principles in the 1880s. The narrator even points to characters fondly remembering the 1887 jubilee celebrations for Queen Victoria (2001: 299), the year affection for the queen from the Bond was expressed in breathless exultation, such as can be seen in this official address that came with three cheers:

We the undersigned, representatives of the Afrikaner Bond of the Colony... wish to approach you with our heartiest and most sincere congratulations on this blessed occasion... We assure you humbly and respectfully [of] our true loyalty to your throne, and we feel proud that in the great British Empire there are no more loyal subjects than those we represent.  
(Quoted in Tamarkin, 1996: 57)

The love for the queen among Cape Afrikaners was strong enough for her to be considered a mother figure (Tamarkin, 1996: 61) but the jubilee described in *Stormwrack* takes place in 1897: it is therefore not as thoroughly indicative of the enthusiasm Victoria enjoyed when compared to the more elaborate description Leipoldt offers in *Gallows Gecko* of an earlier jubilee (Leipoldt, 2001: 76-78). However, as the nagging tension from the Jameson Raid is to blame for the more low-key jubilee of 1897 in the Village, the narrator emphasizes that the

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<sup>156</sup> See Leipoldt (1990), p. 83

queen herself is exonerated of blame by older citizens (2001: 304), and she is still afforded the necessary respect:

The magistrate made a speech; Mr Mance-Bisley said a prayer in English and Mr Uhlman one in Dutch. Everyone joined lustily in singing *God save the Queen* and in the three hurrahs that were given on the suggestion of old Mr Rekker. At private dinners Alexandrina Victoria was toasted. (2001: 304)

Remaining on close terms with the British government was a priority for the Cape Afrikaners, a view obviously shared by many characters in the *Valley* trilogy. The family relations to the Republican section, however, would be the final ingredient in the multifarious melting pot of Cape Afrikaner life from the 1890s onwards. For instance, the faith in Prime Minister Cecil John Rhodes during the 1890s represented a clear discrepancy between Cape and Republican Afrikaner, and Leipoldt's Village community epitomises this:

Mr Rhodes, the Prime Minister, had visited and had been charmed by the Valley. His geniality, his bluff, direct manner, and his evident goodwill towards them, had impressed the farmers and towns-people alike. The fact that he, an Englishman of the English, had allied himself with the party of their choice, the Farmers' Party, generally known as the South African Bond, and that he was shaping his policy in conformity with the wishes expressed at a recent conference, had done much to satisfy them, and they were quite content to entrust the direction of affairs to him. (Leipoldt, 2001: 248)

Once again, recalling the earlier quote in which Mance-Bisley is given advice on how to approach the Village folk, and also recalling Nolte's overtures to friendliness and gaining the trust of the Valley elders in *Gallows Gecko*, there is an emphasis here on courting the hard-to-please Valley community. In discussing Rhodes' relationship to the Cape Afrikaners, Tamarkin (1996) appropriated the metaphor of marriage and courtship, which was also evident in twentieth century Anglophone discourse regarding Britain's relationships to its dominion states (Merrington, 2003: 34). In Tamarkin's marriage metaphor, Hofmeyr, until then a close friend of Rhodes, was the betrayed wife, in this actual exchange that passed between the two regarding Rhodes' complicity in the Jameson Raid:



I could explain better if you had ever been a married man. You were never married. I have not yet forgotten the relation of perfect trust and intimacy which a man has with his wife. We have often disagreed, you and I, but I would no more have thought of distrusting you than a man and his wife think of distrusting each other in any joint undertaking. So it was till now; and now you have let me go on being apparently intimate while you knew that this was preparing, and said nothing. (Hofmeyr, quoted in Tamarkin, 1996: 239)

The news of the raid initially silences many of the Village elders, and poignantly, the New Year's celebrations two days after the news of the raid finds the elders sitting drinking, still in shock, while around them the Village children are at play (2001: 267) and this is a sardonic illustration of Leipoldt's concern with the effects of nationalistic politics on the younger generations. The narrator also reflects that "few in the Village... really grasped the significance of Mr Rhodes' abdication. But there were many who felt that so strange a silence and so complete a surrender of responsibilities as that which it seemed to presage was an ill omen..." (2001: 267). Rector Mance-Bisley is then shown to be unable to follow the concerned conversation in Dutch between a Valley elder and the post-cart delivery man, as more news in the wake of the raid reaches the Village. Mance-Bisley is shown to be suffering from confusion, wielding his jingoism like a sword, blaming Hofmeyr for forcing Rhodes into retirement and feeling that Jameson had been abandoned:

'The papers tell us that Hofmeyr practically forced him to draw up that Proclamation. I still feel rather sore about that... I don't like the idea that we left Jameson in the lurch... It is all very confusing, I admit, but I do not like the idea that an outsider can dictate to her Majesty's representative what to do in an emergency...'

'You've got it all wrong', said the magistrate, patiently. 'Mr Hofmeyr is not an outsider. He is a member of the Executive Council, and virtually the leader of the party in power. Moreover—and get that clearly in your mind, please—the acknowledged power of that party. I do not see how he could have acted differently, and it seems to me that he has acted throughout with the greatest correctness... May I appeal to you... not to add to the difficulties that we have got to face, Rector. I am quite aware that you think Jameson's action is one... dictated by humane motives... I beg to differ, but let us agree to differ, Rector.'

Only bear in mind that people do differ, and will differ, on the exact interpretation to be put to this unfortunate affair, and don't please make it more difficult for us to adjust our differences.' (2001: 270-271)

Mance-Bisley does not immediately heed this caution and continues the debate when he locks horns with the gentle Uhlman, his Dutch-speaking counterpart, and expresses the common Cape English fear of a pan-Afrikaner conspiracy, a threatening enough but ultimately unrealised notion at the time (Tamarkin, 1996: 294) that would like to see "the English swept into the sea" (Leipoldt, 2001: 272). Quakerley's wife, Alice, expresses similar sentiments later in the novel but Mance-Bisley eventually becomes the English character who has to realise and acknowledge his disappointment in England. A keen cricketer who had been attempting for years to mould a decent cricket team with the boys in the Village, Mance-Bisley anticipates Dr Buren in *The Mask*, as both of them use a cricketing analogy to summarise their resigned views on political tensions, with Mance-Bisley concluding that a "filibustering raid... did not seem like cricket... it implied something very much unlike cricket." (2001: 274)

In the next section, I will pay attention to the influence of English heritage in *Stormwrack*, and how it is evident in the Village. There is a pronounced bond between Cape Afrikaners and their land, and in *Stormwrack* the forces of Republicanism and imperialism combine to lay waste to this land.

### ***The English Garden of Andrew Quakerley***

The garden, botany, and horticulture, were common motifs among the Cape elite in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, becoming in fact a complex means of regional and class identification, and a focus for what was understood as an emergent liberal idea of South Africa. (Merrington, 2003: 37)

There are numerous ways the garden in *Stormwrack* can be "read". Regarding Andrew Quakerley's family life, the garden could be said to be a proxy for the wife he does not love and the daughters he does not really know. Just as easily, the garden could stand for civilization itself, as Michael Rice (1980: 89) speculates in his review of *Stormwrack*; there are connections to Voltaire's *Candide* (1759), as well as to the Edenic space of the Valley

itself as it is depicted in *Gallows Gecko*. Elsewhere<sup>157</sup> I have argued that the garden is an infinitely smaller, more selfish space than what went before it than that in *Gallows Gecko*, and on another note, the picturesque garden could also be an extension of Leipoldt's famous Afrikaans nature poetry. My objective is to include these variables in my study of the garden in *Stormwrack*, "reading" the garden as one might a poem, including the imagery and metaphors. The unfolding of the plot in *Stormwrack* multiplies, in some ways, what Leipoldt explored in singular instances before, such as in the poems of *Oom Gert Vertel* where, apart from a few cases, the overt "war poems" and the descriptive "nature poems" weren't obviously integrated: there are six poems dealing with the South African War, and the rest of the collection is devoted to natural scenery. In *Stormwrack*, with the presence of the garden, war and nature are brought into violent juxtaposition.

The South African War is remembered by many historians as a war of modern industry against agrarian, savvy commando foes able to utilise the land itself as a weapon and a defence (Nasson, 2010: 31). The war's reputation as sowing the seeds for "modern" warfare of the twentieth century (2010: 31) is suggested by its notorious guerrilla tactics that initially saw the Boers use the South African landscape to their advantage before the imperialists started attacking the earth itself to deprive the Boers of any kind of support, seizing Boer women and children and placing them in concentration camps. Much of the Boer preparation for the war involved planning agriculturally (2010: 71), such as hoping for good rainfall to provide grazing for horses deployed in the mobility (2010: 71) – in that sense, Boer commandos literally lived off the land even while employing it as an ally against the English who, initially, could not master the harsh, South African terrain. The initial struggles to adhere to European combat disciplines in the unforgiving South African climate was a problem the English infantry metaphorically inherited from earlier Europeans arriving at the Cape, unable to frame in Eurocentric terms what they saw before them (Coetzee, 1988: 64), unable to capture South Africa in any familiar way and initially defeated by this challenge. With more permanent English governance and settlement in the nineteenth century, the lack of care, for want of a better term, displayed by the Company's rule (save, perhaps, for the Company's Gardens in Cape Town) of the eighteenth century is overturned and, for a while at least (reflected in the time period of *Gallows Gecko*, for instance) there is the celebration of the Cape yeoman, embodied by more successful English settlers and the Cape Afrikaners

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<sup>157</sup> See Oppelt (2007)

described in the previous section, eventually represented by the Afrikaner (or Farmers') Bond. My hypothesis is that the war, contextualised to the landscape of South Africa, more specifically the Cape, creates the stormwrack of Leipoldt's title owing to conflicting outlooks the two white sections harboured regarding the pastoral. The war shows that it was difficult for these outlooks to co-exist and, unsurprisingly, when the war claims and destroys the garden, Andrew Quakerley also perishes.

A set of metaphors around the South African Garden may be applied here. In *White Writing*, J.M. Coetzee meditates on early ideas around the natural scenery of the country when he mentions that the Eurocentric myth of an Edenic space failed when applied to South Africa (1988: 1). He engages with this on a few counts, one of which I hope to explore. Firstly, Coetzee mentions that, due to what he terms "idleness" on the part of the Hottentots as the primary (native) gardeners of the Colony, and the "sloth" on the part of Dutch and, eventually, Boer mentality owing to its "barbaric" nature and brutal mistreatment of natives (1988: 3), the initial English view was that the Cape represented an "anti-garden" space. This I will explore as an unfolding, historical conflict between emergent English ideas of the pastoral and Boer ideas of new nationhood, a suggested, ironic inversion of the trend of the later South African War where the Boers seemingly represented the old (the agrarian) and the English represented the new (the imperial war machine and modern industry), as mentioned earlier.

To return to the concept of conflicting pastoral views, it is necessary to explore English ideas around the pastoral in the nineteenth century. By the 1850s, before or after the Great Fair, a resurgence of interest in Voltaire arose, linked to "the rise of Victorian free thought or agnosticism after 1850" (Newman, 1977: D1345), which may roughly be explained as a moral opposition to increased modernity that, ironically, came with increased Empire:

Materially, the middle class lost its soul as it gained the world. While its political and social successes dissipated its ideological cohesiveness, its material success provoked an actual mutiny within the ranks... Socially, the decline of the landed classes and the transfer of political power that was accomplished between the 1830s and 1880s meant that many of the frustrations and objective social and political realities underlying middle-class religiosity simply faded away... (1977: D1345)

The key figure in this mid-nineteenth century period in Victorian England is John Ruskin. At a time when industrialists were often viewed as the new nobility in England (Harris, 1983: 221), indicating a loss of English tradition steeped in a landed past, Ruskin emerged as a counter-revolutionary, “lobbying for conservation societies...with calls for the renewal of English national virtue” (Merrington, 2003: 44) which spearheads the drive for the preservation of vernacular traditions to uphold “English national identity” (2003: 44) with an intense focus on, among other things, architecture, folklore (2003: 44), “high and low church revivalism, classical learning and the archaic notion of a gentleman fostered by public schools and ancient universities” (Harris, 1983: 221) and botanical art – these are qualities Leipoldt expounds through various characters, especially Andrew Quakerley, in the *Valley* trilogy. Thus, at a time when British industry and modernity looked strong, dynamic and imposing, there was a drive to “sustain an outmoded ethic of chivalrous anti-materialism... [through] a mixture of medievalism and gentrification” (1983: 221). Ruskin’s role as “art critic, moralist, and writer of a particularly Victorian baroque prose” (Bullen, 2000: 505) suggested that:

In mid-Victorian times, the true role of the modern intellectual emerged. His role was to doubt what others believed, to demonstrate the complexity of truth, and to assert the connections between bigotry and inhumanity... His myth-making responsibilities contracted, and his critical obligations enlarged. He took a less reverential attitude toward what Huxley styled as ‘that chaos of prejudices called public opinion’; toward what Mill called that ‘hostile and dreaded censorship’, that ‘tyranny’ of the majority’s beliefs... From the 1850s on, the tone of opinion was increasingly ‘negative’, critical, even satirical toward standard Victorian notions of government, religion and social ethics... The new office of the intellectual was to criticize his own class, now the governing class, to deflate its more egregious myths, to watch critically over its handling of power and to preach to the insensitivity born of its wealth. (Newman, 1977:D1346)

The above quote could summarise one understanding of modernism, the artistic criticism or commentary stemming from the modernity, a point I have raised throughout this thesis and, again, in the introduction to this chapter. Early twentieth century literary examples of Western modernism, at times, “evinced... nostalgia for a supposedly lost organic past, setting this against modernisation, industrialization and the contrary modernist set that embraced futurism and the celebration of the new” (Merrington, 2003: 45). Bullen (2000: 506) contends

that, to some writers, Ruskin's "'modernity' ... [is] in his contribution to late nineteenth and early twentieth century ideas about society, education and science". These are reflected, intentionally or not, throughout the *Valley* trilogy in the narrator's didactic asides on similar topics. Throughout *Stormwrack*, nineteenth century ideas about society and science occur that are quite similar to some of Ruskin's thoughts on national commitment to certain matters, such as vernacular preservation. In problematising the mid-twentieth century resurgence of interest in Ruskin that occurred a century after a similar resurgence (displayed by Ruskin) in the work of Voltaire, Jose Harris discusses common perceptions:

High priests of the counter-revolution were Ruskin and Matthew Arnold, who 'deprived production of intrinsic moral value' and 'divided consciousness' among the industrial middle-class. In their wake came the bulk of the intellectual and literary establishment of the next hundred years, some of which fostered national harmony by an appeal to the enduring values of English country life. The result was that the world's most urban nation succumbed to the collective delusion that industrialization was a mere transient phase and that the 'real' England was a placid manorial Arcadia... A nation that has less countryside per head than any other in the world may need a rural mythology to preserve its collective sanity... (1983: 221)

The kind of a mythology about an idyllic rural life Harris mentions likely speaks to a conservationist programme of the kind Ruskin lobbied for, probably an old-world bucolic ideal based on "the picture of the enlightened large landowner with his obedient clientele of copyholders, tenants and cotters that is elaborated upon in the English Tory literary tradition" (Coetzee, 1988: 79) – and Ruskin repeatedly acknowledged the Tory bias in his thinking. The problem with a notion of a "manorial Arcadia", Harris goes on to show, is that a significant number of influential writers and thinkers like H.G. Wells and Arnold Bennett were decidedly not anti-profit and did not lose faith in innovation and economic prosperity (1983: 222), meaning that thoughts meandering to an older England as a "perfect garden" with an established rural order always had their contradictions. Coetzee (1988: 77) identifies that, from the 1880s to 1939, "the urban-rural dissociation from sensibility" (1988: 77) is notable. However, Coetzee (1988: 79) mentions that a review of English history opens numerous dimensions that extend the search for an idealised English peasantry. He warns that such a search may not be very successful:

...idealisation of a past feudal order of reciprocal duties... thus the

writer looking to England for a model of a sturdy peasantry with its own land rights, joined by a web of reciprocal duties to a similarly rooted local aristocracy, is inevitably driven to search further and farther back in history, into a more and more misty past... (1988: 80)

This apparent delusion seems especially prevalent in nineteenth century Victorian England. Ruskin himself turned “toward a utopian vision of the Middle Ages... in a... regressive tendency toward an age of presumed innocence” (Fleishman, 1980: 550). Books on flower folklore, flower poetry, introductions to botany and books aiming to explore the meanings of flowers in various tenets of religion and culture were avidly consumed by middle-class Victorians (Seaton, 1985: 256-7), similar to studies launched by the Pre-Raphaelites (1985: 257), to whom Ruskin also had intimate connections. Ruskin’s own contribution to flower folklore was *Proserpina*, steeped in his fierce religious and moral flights and set against the “modern science” of Darwinism (1985: 276). *Proserpina* showed an example of the national pride of a lost English past, heralded by the subtitle, “The Scotland and England Which My Father Knew” (1985: 279). In the book, Ruskin claimed that “whenever a nation rises into consistent, vital and, through many generations, enduring power, there is still the garden of God” (1985: 280).

In his study of how these thought trends in Britain ultimately influenced South Africa during the Victorian nineteenth century, John Comaroff emphasizes the strong attachment shown to an idealised British past at a time when it felt that industrial growth had driven farmers from the rural areas and to “bleak northern cities” (1989: 667). There was a perceived opposition between country and city in the popular imagination in England (Comaroff, 1989: 668), the conflicting sides of a shaping, influential, industrial modernity and a rural, mythic past (1989: 668), with the pastoral also signifying “the possibility of paradise regained, a Utopian rhapsody for the future” (1989: 668). He identifies three components to this sentimental attachment, two of which I will focus on here: the feudal establishment and the yeomanry. With the former, the earlier quote from Coetzee has already shown the danger of Victorian belief in a rural order that may never have existed, and with the latter, “the transformation of the country was associated, in the British imagination, with the fall of the yeomanry” (1989: 667). In *Stormwrack*, Andrew Quakerley laments exactly the same thing: that the good Valley families of English, Hanoverian and Flemish stock had died out or degenerated (Leipoldt, 2001: 305) – and this, as the *Valley* trilogy would have it, occurred against the



steady migration to the “north” of the Boer republics, with Transvaal by the 1890s at the top of the industrial game due to its gold mines. In reality, there was no yeomanry in South Africa, as the history of slavery into the nineteenth century attests, but in *Stormwrack* there is an emphasis on the Quakerleys and Rekkers as being squires of the land.

Leipoldt draws attention to notions of an idyllic rural England and its projection onto its colonies through settlers and missionaries (Comaroff, 1989: 668). If Andrew Quakerley’s garden can be read, in this sense, as an English garden, then the rural idyllic vision of *Gallows Gecko* is carried over into the opening chapters of its sequel in which the world of the Valley, the District and the Village are clearly depicted, in the days before the Jameson Raid, as being amicable, peaceful and harmonious:

In time the Village became the centre of activity of the Valley, the seat of a magistrate, the headquarters of the police and the post office... It gave to the Valley farmers a centre where all things to which they attached importance were presumably concentrated. (Leipoldt, 2001: 229)

Comaroff (1989: 667) also explains that the divide between town or urban centre and the rural village was mostly based on the migration of people out of the countryside and the threat this carried to the close-knit family unit unable to retain its independence in the face of this migration. However, whether or not Leipoldt was mindful of nineteenth century tensions between English town and English pastoral, industry and rural, he seems to include the concern while describing the relationship between the Village and the Valley:

It introduced, too, a cleavage which from the very beginning exercised some influence, intangible but none the less effective, upon the two sections of the community, the urban and the rural. In the early stages, the interests of those two sections were so closely linked that there could be no question of antagonism, still less of enmity, but as time went on, and the Village became more and more the home of those who had no direct interest in tilling the soil while the Valley had no great concern with trade, the distinctions between the two sets grew more pronounced, socially and culturally as well as industrially, and, at least, politically. (2001: 229)

The splitting of the District community into those who owned land and those who didn’t looks ominously ahead, and backwards, to the cessation of friendship between those who

trekked and those who didn't, or those who rebelled and those who didn't. The tenuous grip on peace between the Dutch-speaking members of the Village and the English families is reflected in the two churches in the Village designated for each group. Whereas, in the time of Charles Quakerley, some prominent family heads attended services in both churches, by the time of the South African War this has changed so significantly that, fearing too much public interest invested in the Boer prisoner of war, Conroy, Andrew Quakerley and Magistrate Storam advise Conroy to attend the English church service (2001: 395), a move otherwise welcomed by the jingoistic Alice only because she mistrusts the cosmopolitan, completely virtuous Uhlman and his services in the Dutch Reformed Church.

The novel's description of the layout of the Village houses assumes socio-horticultural proportions that speak to the "complex" means of regional and class identification mentioned by Merrington (2003: 46) and quoted earlier. The Village, days before the Jameson Raid, inspires an enthusiastic narrative description similar to those in *Gallows Gecko*, but here on a smaller scale:

All the village houses were thatched, with pointed gables, solid walls, and a stoep on the northern aspect, facing the front street which was little more than a broad footpath, and overlooking the gardens... Every house in that long, straggling street possessed its garden, and every garden in the Village was well cultivated, with a dignity of its own that seemed to resent meanness and to challenge comparison with the greenery of the veld in winter... The Village itself was a beautiful spot. It lay in an amphitheatre of blue mountains whose weathered outlines stood out strikingly against the blue background of sky. From these mountains came the river that ran at the foot of the gardens, coursing slowly along a bed that had altered its position from time to time. Set in an environment of green, the little Village, with its neatly thatched, whitewashed houses, gleamed like a jewel. Few agitations had stirred it. Its inhabitants had lived placidly and peacefully for half a hundred years. It represented much of what was best and most worthy in the Colony, a quiet out-of-the-way village, mildly famous, within a limited circle, for the excellence of its wine, for the flavour of its peaches and seedling oranges, and for the garden which Andrew Quakerley had created. (2001: 238).

The English presence of Andrew Quakerley's garden links it to his motherland, even though, later, in keeping with the cosmopolitanism of the trilogy, we discover that Quakerley had imported seeds and plants from around the world to be cultivated in his garden (2001: 250). This is, then, an ideal old-world rural order in which the Village operates on the feudal system mentioned by Comaroff, and in which, at some earlier point, the squires had thrived if we remember the supremely successful farms of *Gallows Gecko*.

However, the Village, with the garden, reveals more than just a nod to the imagined English pastoral. It also, in the narrative, is open to being read as a space implying heritage rights. The whitewashed houses and their gables described above historically constitute the "Cape Dutch" architecture which Herbert Baker had taken note of upon arriving at the Cape, yet the term had not really been articulated in the nineteenth century and Baker's appropriation of it in his architecture simultaneously revived and stylised it (van Graan, 2008: 8). Baker was influenced by Ruskin and William Morris and pursued the vernacular projects they expounded in their teachings, and the architecture that resulted was driven by a desire to exploit the virtues of good craftsmanship and local materials, and found its inspiration in the rural vernacular buildings of England (2008: 8). Baker noted the likeness of Dutch and Flemish buildings, the links between the gables in the Cape and those in Holland (2008: 10), and also Flemish refugee influences from Europe (2008: 13). He wrote enthusiastically about his first impressions of Dutch-style rural houses. He also noticed the same appreciation in Rhodes (for whom he redesigned the Groote Schuur residence in Cape Town to the "Cape Dutch" style) of the natural fit of these houses to the Cape landscape, suggesting the trend in the *Valley* trilogy of describing the integration between farm or town houses and nature, and again evinced in the above quote from *Stormwrack*. Coetzee (1988: 66) also writes about the importance of the farm as being integrated with nature in the South African order. Baker himself mentioned that

...nature's handiwork is on a larger scale... [with]...the landscape so bare in detail... that the design and disposition of buildings must be conceived on a monumental scale to be in harmony with the work of nature (Baker in van Graan, 2008: 12)

The Cape Dutch-style architecture was ultimately rejected by early Afrikaner nationalists like Pierneef, who dismissed it as "foreign". Its appropriation by Baker, later to be knighted, lends

it presumably English bragging rights. The Ruskin-esque vernacular aims identified here speak more to English heritage projects. At least, the presence of Baker's nomenclature in discussion of the Cape Dutch style anticipates the more furious 'heritage-formation' projects in South Africa from 1910 onwards (Merrington, 2003: 45). This means that we could view the Village in *Stormwrack* as being a model of an idealised English pastoral more so than an Afrikaner one because of the vernacular project (rooted in England) evident in the houses and the magnificent garden that could as easily be read as an "English garden", symbolising the motherland of the Quakerley family. Alice Quakerley, Andrew's incorrigible, jingoistic wife, we are told by the narrator, had some wishes of showcasing national pride in the look of their house:

It must be confessed that Andrew had not troubled himself much about the details of his new residence... Mrs Quakerley was much harder to satisfy on some points in connection with the building than her husband. Alice had wanted everything of the best, for in the new house she had decided that she would outshine all her neighbours and prove to the world at large and to the Village in particular that the Quakerleys were something more than Valley folk. The rococo gables had been her suggestion... (Leipoldt, 2001: 239)

As Alice only really appears in the novel to loudly proclaim the superiority of English culture at any given opportunity, her input on the look of the Quakerley home no doubt had as its aim the establishment of a showpiece, something she could boast of, especially given her complete mistrust of anyone unable to speak English in the Village. She is, in a sense, an example of an English nationalist, in contrast to Andrew's cosmopolitanism. Andrew's garden may well be a celebration of heritage, but it is not intended as a defence of England and certainly not a defensive celebration. Unusually, Alice's tendency to boast lends her one, perhaps the only, affinity with Andrew who, in cultivating his garden, is surely also creating a centre of attraction, something that boasts, even if his aims aren't as obviously defensive as Alice's.

That the garden itself draws broad attention is manifest from its first descriptions in the novel:

Of all the gardens, that of Andrew Quakerley was indubitably the finest

as it was also the largest and best cared for. It comprised several acres, a far larger space than that allotted to its fellows on either side, and extended right down to the banks of the sluggishly flowing river whose waters joined the larger Valley stream three miles beyond the Village.... The Village took pride in it, but familiarity with its many excellences had blunted local appreciation of its merits, which were perhaps better recognized by visitors than by residents. Abroad, the Quakerley garden was well enough known to those who took an interest in such things. At Cape Town its virtues were lauded by the government botanist, and endorsed by the comparatively few rivals who in the Peninsula had attempted to achieve similar successes on a smaller or larger scale. They drew comparisons between Andrew's garden and others and these were not altogether unfavourable to the former. Everyone who knew about such matters, and was competent to judge, declared that Mr Quakerley's garden was the one thing that raised the Village into a position above that of other communities in the Colony. (2001: 242)

The garden is, in this context, symbolic of a purified re-imagining of the English countryside that had been defaced by industry (Comaroff, 1989: 668) because it is as-yet untouched and uncorrupted, a place of innocence (although South Africa obviously did not have the same level of industry or defacement). It is also cultivated by an Englishman from a stately family, no matter that he also spoke Dutch and had family ties to the republics.

Andrew's role as a gardener is congruently described:

His new hobby, which in reality was the avatar of his youthful yearning to plant a garden, engrossed him almost to the exclusion of other interests. He threw himself with avidity into the work of planning, perfecting and ennobling the magnificent creation which he had in mind. Long ago he had laid, in imagination, the foundations of it, sketched in outline the salient features, filled in the details, and studied the combinations upon which he had decided... He wanted quality, a choice, delightfully patterned series of plots, in which practical utility should neighbour aesthetically satisfying arrangement, a collector's garden more than a nurseryman's, a dilettante's more than a professional's. He spent anxious hours in considering how the best effects could be obtained, whether by massing or by single, ungrouped sorts, and eagerly read and assimilated everything that could be of help in arriving at a wholly satisfactory decision.

(Leipoldt, 2001: 241)

Andrew Quakerley is highly content with his garden, having rejected farming after trying his hand at it, and a character outside the Village, Mias, criticises him for this, comparing him unfavourably to his father, Charles Quakerley, and predicting that Andrew would get “nothing but trouble and disappointment” (2001: 316). He also describes Andrew as “softer – more woman-like... He was never a farmer. He’s a townsman through and through. Why should a grown man bother about flowers and such-like things? Leave it to the women, say I.” (2001: 316) Mias further censures Andrew for his gardening preoccupation by claiming that he spends more time in his flower garden than Mias does on his farm, calling it a waste (2001: 316). What Merrington (2003: 41) sees as the *Valley* trilogy’s trajectory of building (*Gallows Gecko*), defending (*Stormwrack*) and moral collapse (*The Mask*) can also be applied to Andrew’s relationship with his garden: he “builds” the garden the way Nolte “built” his farm in *Gallows Gecko*, but his defence of the garden is inadequate and ushers in a moral collapse of delicately balanced beliefs in Cape tradition and colonial governance. Throughout the novel, with increased political agitation obvious, Andrew stubbornly refuses to acknowledge that the war could enter the District and at times his denial is almost tragicomic: when he and Old Martin Rekker discuss possible strategies the Boer commandos would employ, Andrew consults an atlas and, referring to the mountainous terrain of the Cape, concludes that the commandos could not possibly negotiate it and therefore would not enter the Cape (2001: 366). The novel also symbolically links him to a woman, Queen Victoria herself, when it places Andrew sitting in his garden, reading the news that the queen was dying in Osborne. He identifies with the sovereign, feeling that she, like him, embodied “divided but unmitigated loyalties” (2001: 404). After Andrew speculates on the implications of this news on the mood of loyal Cape Afrikaners, he falls asleep, and one of his servants finds him so, remarking that “the old master is sure getting older every day” (2001: 404).

Whereas Nolte had a great deal of help in establishing his farm in *Gallows Gecko*, Andrew selfishly tends to his garden and there is the minimising of the utopian metaphor of the previous novel in this tendency. Elsewhere<sup>158</sup>, I have argued that this indicates a shift from the sense of community to a more limited individualism, a shift that draws attention to the *The Mask* as being at the opposite end of the spectrum to *Gallows Gecko*. This is a move from the actual community found in *Gallows Gecko* to an imagined community, found in *The*

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<sup>158</sup> See Oppelt (2007)

*Mask*, which is explored in the next chapter. From the Valley we now move to the Village, and from a farm we now focus on a garden. The broad humanitarian idiom is rapidly scaled down from the previous novel, even though the focus on the garden itself is more concentrated, more intimate and more intense in the analogous context of the politics at work in the novel. The poetic symbolism of the garden becomes direct when Uhlman suggests to Andrew that the ultimately failed meeting between Kruger and Milner<sup>159</sup> should rather have been hosted in the Quakerley garden (2001: 340). The gold of the Transvaal – a natural resource that vindicated the Boer belief that, after trek and toil, the Transvaal was their “promised land” – is held by many historians to have been a deciding factor for the English fighting a war against the Boers (Nasson, 2010: 54). Comaroff’s observation of the negative relationship between industry and rural idyll could also, possibly, find a space for itself here. In the novel, the war was provoked by the industrial wealth of the republics and was to end in the stormwrack of Quakerley’s garden.

With the implied selfishness of Andrew being the sole caretaker of his garden, a further inference could be that the lack of a communal effort always exposed the garden, and what it stood for, to the danger of war. By himself, Andrew simply was not strong enough to protect it and the narrative condemns him, yet at the same time pities him for turning a blind eye to this danger coming ever closer to the Village and doing nothing about it – nothing but tending to his garden. After his garden is destroyed, Andrew’s circumstances deteriorate. He suffers a stroke and never really recovers, with the memory of the garden’s destruction warped in his mind and distanced by impending madness that is actually the last state before death itself. His sister, Joan, remarks, close to the end of the novel, that Andrew was “never very courageous. He hated fuss, and always took the easy way out” (Leipoldt, 2001: 499), while Storam observes that, in his state of solipsism after his stroke, Andrew “will be spared the regrets and the disillusionment which so many of us must be prepared to meet” (2001: 498). To emphasize how violently Andrew’s private world had been shattered Storam assigns “a gang of convicts” (2001: 500) to repair what they could of the garden, in an attempt to restore some semblance of its former dignity should Andrew venture out to look at it. The result, of course, is that the shock of seeing his “artistry” so ruined is the final straw for Andrew, who has no will to live afterwards.

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<sup>159</sup> This was hosted in Bloemfontein in May 1899, in which the two failed to barter for peace.



Whereas some blindly optimistic characters hope that positive lessons could be extracted from the war to help “grow” a better future (2001: 498), the narrator’s tone is quite indifferent:

It had been a beautiful Village... Its environmental beauty remained...  
But the Village itself was marred and blemished. The court house stood  
as a blackened ruin. Several of the church houses had been burned. (2001: 508)

A further lament of the passing of the once-idyllic town, where the old feudal order existed acknowledges the damaging of both this order and the nature that facilitated it:

Trade and industry, such trade and industry as the Village and the  
District had had in the past, were stagnant; both would take time to  
recover... Trees had been ruthlessly chopped down, for firewood  
and to clear space for military purposes; most of thee gardens were,  
like Quakerley’s, a mockery of what they had once been. No new  
buildings had been erected. The only addition to the Village had been  
those graves in the two cemeteries. (2001: 508)

The only new addition to the Village, then, is death, at the start of the new century. The organic vision of the Cape Afrikaners is destroyed along with the garden, and this loss would feed the nationalism that became zealous by the time of the next major conflict, the Great War of 1914—1917. Improbably, at the end of the novel, Uhlman pre-empts what is to come:

If you ask me, the worst thing we shall have to face when all this is  
over is our own people—we Colonials, I mean—our own people’s  
feeling of inferiority. It will make them jealous of all criticism,  
impulsive like children who wish to show off, and as an excuse they  
will always be able to plead that it’s England’s fault. (2001: 504)

The usually even-tempered Storam also projects the coming years:

When all this is over, who do you think will be the popular heroes? ...  
The fellows who came here and started all this trouble, and turned  
this District into a little hell for us! They’ll be the national heroes, and  
they’ll look down in infinite scorn on the Dutchman who remained  
loyal to his oath, and refused to imagine grievances that did not exist. (2001: 504)

Not only is Leipoldt neatly anticipating the bombast of much of the sequel, *The Mask*, but he is perchance also casting light on what may have been the misreading of his career as an Afrikaans writer. Because he wrote about the effects of the war on Cape Afrikaners in his poetry, it may have been assumed that he was writing about all Afrikaners, which was not the case even if he did openly support the commandos as a young journalist.

The poetry his reputation rests on is justly famous for its invocation of nature scenery, and it is possible that in *Stormwrack*, the garden is also a metaphor for the fragility of Cape Afrikaner loyalty, that it was complex and not easily defined, that it needed to be cultivated and assiduously cared for. Perhaps Leipoldt was all the while aware that the pastoral ideal in Victorian culture was groundless and empty in the face of unstoppable modernity and with that so too was the emerging Afrikaner rhetoric similarly flawed. The shift, alluded to earlier, from a harmonious, amicable community to a splintered, imagined community forms the focus of the following chapter on *The Mask*. The events of *Stormwrack*, in Leipoldt's fictional scheme, have 'created' the world of *The Mask*. This is the divided, post-war society feared by Storam, Buren and Uhlman at the end of *Stormwrack*. In Leipoldt's episodic structure, it is the undesirable modern world that has been created by the South African War.

## CHAPTER 6: THE MASK

This chapter will focus on the engagement Leipoldt displayed with Afrikaner nationalism in the 1920s. Whereas some of the focus on *Stormwrack*, in the previous chapter, included examining Leipoldt's journalistic contributions as a war correspondent during the hostilities of 1899 to 1902, it will be argued that his writing for newspapers and other regular publications during the 1920s also intersects with his fiction in interesting ways. Leipoldt's journalism during this period outlined the thematic points that emerge in the *Valley* trilogy and its contestation of Afrikaner nationalism. *The Mask* may seem less a fictional narrative than it is a sounding board, a propaganda piece that ostensibly tries to create sympathy for a certain political party against another. However, I argue that the novel is a document more concerned with the present of a country that is being governed into the myth of an exclusionary patriotism that would prove unsustainable. In *The Mask*, characters are aware that the modern South African state was being created by a race and class of people basing their heritage claim on the events of the Great Trek and the South African War. The novel ends on a bitter note of caution: it warns of how Afrikaner nationalism is laying the seeds of its own destruction, not its continued prosperity. Afrikaner nationalism was the "enemy" that inspired Leipoldt's writing of newspaper pieces in the 1920s and his completion of *The Mask* in 1932.

In showing how Leipoldt's contested nationalism is propagated by the characters in *The Mask*, this chapter also aims to investigate how Leipoldt's own life informed much of the narrative. An argument will be made for the novel as a modernist text and this chapter will begin with a discussion of style and form in the novel. The discussion of the novel as modernist will also involve closer scrutiny of Leipoldt himself. The idea of Leipoldt as a reluctant modernist, as discussed in the third chapter of this thesis, will re-occur here. To explore the modernism in *The Mask*, the idea of Leipoldt's figuratively divided self must be considered. As his biographical details form the kind of immediate presence they do in the novel, it could follow that his life story is as much a part of the fiction.

From looking at how aspects of Leipoldt's personal life inform his fiction, I will then study the fictional character, Elias Vantloo in *The Mask*, as the caricature of an Afrikaner nationalist in the late 1920s. I suggest that the way Vantloo is drawn as a character falls in

line with much of Leipoldt's criticism of Afrikaner nationalists, both in *The Mask* and in some of Leipoldt's journalism. I will continue to look at another two characters in the novel, Santa and Mabuis, and return to a comparison between the fiction and aspects of Leipoldt's personal life. My argument with this particular point is that Santa and Mabuis could be considered as being fictional representations of Leipoldt himself.

In this chapter I will also explore how Leipoldt's writing in *The Mask*, as well as his journalism in the late 1920s, comments on the Afrikaner nationalism of the time. This nationalism partly hinged on print media to help strengthen the Afrikaans language and thereby strengthen the nationalist project, as the Afrikaans language was central to this. The use of print media in this way suggests an example of what Benedict Anderson would later call imagined communities (mentioned in the first two chapters of this thesis). I aim to show how Leipoldt was both a part of this nation-building project as well as an opponent of it.

This study of imagined communities will then lead to another section in which I provide more detailed analysis of selected newspaper pieces written by Leipoldt that show the general trajectory of his criticism of Afrikaner nationalism, and in this analysis I will also include relevant quotes from *The Mask*. I will also examine an article on South African literature written by Leipoldt in 1928-1929 as one of the crucial, published pieces outlining some of Leipoldt's ideas about art and culture.

Lastly, in this chapter I will look at social inequalities shown in the novel that speak to matters of race and nation or, more specifically, the problem race proposes for a South African imagined community. Here I will draw attention to how *The Mask* points to the different social contexts experienced by two different races in the novel, represented by white and coloured characters.

More overtly than in the previous two novels, *The Mask* is a critique of Afrikaner nationalism or, to accommodate Leipoldt's broader outlook, a critique of sectional politics and divisive policies. *The Mask* is the culmination of the *Valley* trilogy's concern with modernity and responses to change, and its period setting follows three major international conflicts: the South African War, the Russian Revolution (1905-1907) and World War I (1914-1918), two of which involved South Africa. In that sense, it is a post-war novel, and although most of the characters discuss and debate the South African War, there are also acknowledgements of the

implications of World War I on South African society. Populist lobbying among nationalist politicians is another regular topic of conversation in the novel, and the events of the Great Trek and the South African War form part of these discourses. There are also impassioned exchanges between characters on the topic of national culture, and the elaboration of culture into a kind of industry that comes to associate itself with nationalism and patriotism. The moment is modern in *The Mask* because of the *Valley* trilogy's emphasis on comparison: in the three-phase model Leipoldt employed, thoughts on the contemporary moment of the 1920s were recast through two older worlds. In *The Mask*, the moment has only itself to inspect because the chronology of the trilogy has caught up with it, and there is no certainty as to what follows. The arguments between characters in *The Mask* seem regularly to go nowhere, and point to no resolution, no future time to settle in. As in *Gallows Gecko*, the novel operates along two different lines: plot and discourse. As in *Gallows Gecko*, the plot is resolved but the actual story, the underlying narrative composed of "bundled threads of discourse", is open-ended.

Afrikaner nationalist concerns emerge as topics of deliberation, and there is an emphasis on education, specifically literature. This last point also refers to the novel's concerns with the two official South African languages at the time, English and Afrikaans, and how the two languages are at conflicting political purposes in South African culture. In this sense, a war is continuing in the novel between the English and Afrikaner white sections through constitutional change, cultural propaganda and a defense of group identity. The memory of the South African War, which was a war between England and South Africa, is used as political leverage in a new war, in which South Africa is at war with itself. The argumentative conversations between characters, the generally vulnerability of the mood of the Village and the sometimes indifferent tone of the narrator suggest brokenness in the world represented in the novel. This brokenness emerges largely because there appeared to be harmony, amicability and holism in *Gallows Gecko*, with hardly any refractory characters. In *Stormwrack*, there was no real enemy or villain apart from the avatar of war itself and its effects on a community with ties to those on both sides of the war. In *The Mask* there is a definite villain who does seem to be an archetype for Afrikaner nationalists, but to neatly consider him as the real danger in the novel is unwise. He is emblematic of a larger problem of moral corruption and superficial, aggressive patriotism that abstracts the country it supposedly fights for.

The community in *Gallows Gecko* is made by Leipoldt to exist and act outside of history in an ideal, Romantic farming environment that only ever interacts with the nearest capital of Empire by post-cart. Confusing this, though, is the fact that this community willingly follows Queen Victoria, and subsequently Leipoldt's lament for a lost, organic past is in danger of merely being a lament for the days of the rule of Empire. In *Stormwrack*, Leipoldt writes from his own experience of the South African War but writes from a different perspective to his youth. Whereas the younger Leipoldt was only too well aware of the impact of history during the war, the older Leipoldt now writes against the younger Leipoldt, imbuing the loss of the organic and patrician tradition with his knowledge that the loss was to affect the future of this community.

### ***Autobiography and fiction***

This chapter seeks to explore how *The Mask* can be read as part of the greater narrative of Leipoldt's life that would include his movements, and crucial events both to his life story and his prose (fiction and non-fiction) as well as to the history of South Africa at the same time. I will draw extensively on Leipoldt's most comprehensive biographer, J.C. Kannemeyer, in the parts of the chapter in order to explain carefully the crucial events in Leipoldt's life in the 1920s that have importance in his work.

*The Mask* will be read in this chapter as an extension of Leipoldt's political opinions in the 1920s, and in so doing the novel may also be read as an extension of his movements in this period, as well as the social and political context that framed Leipoldt, the author. It is my opinion that *The Mask* is the dramatisation of Leipoldt's political concerns in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Leipoldt's essay, *Cultural Development*, makes critical points about South African society that appear within a fictional framework in *The Mask*.

*The Mask* is not stylistically a typical modernist novel. There is a very notable tension between realism and modernism in the novel's style, and the narrative veers inconsistently between following a conventional plot-based structure a more detached, character-strong study that relies somewhat on experiments with form. For instance, the realism is very evident in Leipoldt's recreation of the Valley in the late 1920s, especially as there is a close psychological proximity between the author and the place and time he is depicting, namely Clanwilliam in the 1920s. Leipoldt may even have written parts of the novel while in his home town, as he visited there often from Cape Town. His depiction of the Clanwilliam

scenery is authoritative not only because he infuses it with his own memory but also because he had already invested so much of it in the poetry that defined his literary career. The novel's plot is dramatic, which is understandable, given that it was based on Leipoldt's own play, *Afgode*, but there are also overtones of Gothic and Victorian novels. For instance, Santa's philosophical moment in which she wonders about the ghost of Andrew Quakerley and feels haunted by staring at the garden he used to tend seems closer to nineteenth century fiction. The death of Sophia and the discovery of Ayah Minah's secret on a dark, stormy night echo the horror fiction Leipoldt both read and produced. The portentous repetition of motifs, such as the need almost every character feels to keep secrets from Maria, harks back to *Gallows Gecko*'s Stevenson-esque moments. If Leipoldt was openly supportive of English literary culture in his journalistic output (not at the expense of his progressive thoughts about Afrikaans literary development), it could be detected in the English fiction of the *Valley* trilogy.

The conversational, political chapters of the novel inserted between moments of tense plot action are similar to Schreiner's *From Man to Man* and speak to further experiments in realism – however, realism of the kind that is already impregnated with a kind of modernist feeling, which I shall try to explain. It is necessary to focus on Leipoldt's didacticism in his writing, his almost inability to contain the worldly teacher in him – so much so that most of his fictional writing ventures (mostly in Afrikaans) revealed the same sharer of knowledge that was already a known quality of his documentary prose. Leipoldt's broad intellectual understanding of numerous topics related to arts and culture can be found in his writing on cookery, wine, medicine and botany as easily as it can be found in his work on South African history, politics, language and social concerns. When he applied this didacticism to his journalism, it is perhaps fair to say that the intention was to promote shared understanding of certain topics, to educate and enlighten in the old, missionary ethic (Leipoldt, 1990: 1-3). When he wrote didactically in his fiction, however, a consequence, whether intentional or not, can be noted in his narrative style: the realism took on symptoms of modernist experimentation by shifting focus quite sharply to the implied author. In other words, through the characters in *The Mask*, different ideas of the implied author emerge, and these characters are in many ways closely linked to Leipoldt's life story. The characters are predetermined by events and experiences in Leipoldt's life that preceded the writing while the narrative dramatises the mood of the actual time setting in which he was writing. The plot is very much Leipoldt's fictional recasting of the modern South Africa with which he was unhappy,



delivered through scenic realism but internally contradicted by polemics rooted in Leipoldt's non-fiction writing and even his activities at the time, which included his editorship of South Africa's first medical journal (his interests in examining miscegenation, for instance, emerge through Santa's theories) and his publicised clashes with C.J. Langenhoven. An example of this approach can be found in the debate between Santa and Pierre Mabuis in Chapter 7 of the novel: parts of their exchanges Leipoldt had already articulated as his own thoughts in his regular newspaper column with the *Volkstem*<sup>160</sup> so that the fiction merely adds a dramatic platform on which his real-life opinions can be displayed. In doing this, Leipoldt is perhaps partially pre-empting Anderson's concept of imagining a community of readers; he may well be acting as an agent of his own (contested) nationalisms, trying to provide the material (his regular column, his fiction) that singular readers could employ to imagine plurality. Certainly, the characters within his fiction are already a community of the author's moral universe, and both this community and universe are, to a certain extent, reaction against the imagined community of Afrikaner nationalist readers. It is as if Leipoldt is deliberately trying to intervene in the production of imagined communities by trying to create his own. In his column in the *Volkstem* he regularly undermined popular nationalist sentiments by sharing his opinions of them. If he had a loyal readership he may have succeeded in establishing his column as an anti-nationalist intellectual space, but there is little evidence to prove how successful or unsuccessful his column was. Many of the discussion points raised in his column, however, are resurrected in *The Mask*'s conversational moments between characters.

Much of Leipoldt himself is invested in the characters of his fiction, and while a sense of realism is abetted especially in the opening chapter of *The Mask*, with the descriptions of the Vantloo home (Leipoldt, 2001: 517), and in Chapter 7 when Santa and Mabuis observe the state of the Valley's farmlands (Leipoldt, 2001: 551-555), the clearest marker of Leipoldt's writing style can be found in moments of 'essaying', when Leipoldt's broad general knowledge is on display. The remarkable parallels Mabuis, in Chapter 7 of *The Mask*, draws

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<sup>160</sup> Santa and Mabuis, for the most part, debate the importance of Afrikaans in cultural matters. Mabuis challenges Santa to describe a field of flowers in Afrikaans and she fails to meet the challenge successfully. Santa also defends that a lack of Afrikaans-language instructional guides hampers the usage of farm machinery for Afrikaans-language farmers, thereby curtailing industry, and she blames this on English-speaking South African Party members not catering for Afrikaans-speaking farmers. The debate then takes in nationalism. Mabuis points that the language issue at the heart of Afrikaner nationalism is divisive in ways that would stymie cultural growth in South Africa, and accuses Afrikaner politics of hypocrisy by suggesting that high levels of miscegenation exist between white and coloured people but that this is denied by nationalists. Mabuis also implies that the Dutch Reformed Church is somehow culpable in the miscegenation, Leipoldt's journalism mentions most of these issues, and his article *Ons Letterkunde* (Our Literature), which I will examine later, is where many of his opinions can be found in one coherent piece.

between South African and Serbian nationalism (Leipoldt, 2001: 553) is an example of this. At that point in the novel, Leipoldt's thoughts on South Africa's political atmosphere of the late 1920s are articulated in the discussion between Santa and Mabuis: Santa represents the nationalist point of view while Mabuis, accused by Santa of being South African Party-minded (as Leipoldt would have been), holds a more worldly, cosmopolitan and humanist point of view. Significantly, this discussion takes place while the two characters are walking alongside a field outside a farm they have just visited. Part of their discussion involves the consequences of political pressure on farmers to produce land that can sustain a growing number of white families (Leipoldt, 2001: 552)<sup>161</sup>. The realism is evident, as Leipoldt is able to accurately depict the state of the Valley during the late 1920s, but in aligning some of the characters so closely to his own views and not allowing them the space to be framed by the realism, he intrudes on the consistency of his narrative as *The Mask* then becomes part-realist, part personal propaganda. This is notable in the manner in which the narrator depicts Elias Vantloo: he is grotesque, impossibly villainous to the point of being almost comedic, and the narrator of *The Mask* is among his loudest critics. In such moments, there is no clear distinction between author and narrator. This also occurs in the previous two novels of the *Valley* trilogy, but the period setting of *The Mask* draws more attention to the narrator's apparent discomfort with the period.

As I argued earlier, Leipoldt's literary modernism involves the "device" of conversation. Like *Gallows Gecko*, *The Mask* is, between moments of action, a series of conversations, dialogues, that Leipoldt was taking part in while writing the novel. The discourses and debates he engaged in were spread through the voices of his characters, the fragments of Leipoldt's own identity. The figure of Elias stands for the nationalist leaders and writers Leipoldt fell out with, and as most of the other characters are antagonistic toward Elias (and Santa undergoes a change of heart about her father), the dialogue here is a perpetuation of the voice in his newspaper column, speaking to an imagined community of readers. The motif of loss, of a wistfulness for an older, better world pervades Leipoldt's documentary prose in the 1920s, and the means by which Leipoldt expresses this sense of loss – through writing about a folkloric vision (Merrington, 2003: 45) for the country – ties in to similar efforts by the very Nationalists he was ostensibly opposing. This then begs questions that in Leipoldt's case struggles for straightforward answers: was he anti-nationalist or anti-nation? What was his

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<sup>161</sup> At the time, the opposite was happening with farmland shrinking in size because of overgrazing, and because of the size of the farming families living on it ; see Giliomee (2003a)

contested nationalism really based upon? Like he intimates through both Elias and Mabuis in *The Mask*, as well as in his regular column: was there any fundamental difference between the South African Party and the National Party?

The questions themselves merely emphasize the complexity of Leipoldt – he was a man of many identities, a scattered personality who seldom answered questions the same way twice, and someone who was notoriously hard to pigeonhole. In some ways he was as complex as some of his most famous poems which were widely misread, and his social life was as perplexing as some of the changes of direction in his writing style. This arresting literary figure of the beguiling, shape-shifting artist, combined with his work, seen here to be centred on a nostalgic modernism, contributes to an idea of an identity forever in motion, forever changing. In this particular case, the changes in Leipoldt's writing form are notable: from economically worded poetry to over-explicated prose. These changes, or shifts, occur as the socio-political paradigm around him shifts, and so too does his persona shift while retaining his core arguments for humanism and tolerance. This refusal to be pigeonholed causes problems regarding a search for an 'authentic' Leipoldt, but these problems allow his biographical details to be read as a modernist narrative.

In 1925, after more than a decade spent in Transvaal, Leipoldt returned to Cape Town permanently, and started perhaps the most sustained phase of his career as a writer. Leipoldt's output from 1926 onwards included writing collections of short prose and drama, childrens' stories and more contributions to magazine columns, as well as drawing attention to his knowledge of the culinary arts (Kannemeyer, 1999:492). His most effective critical writing could be found in his regular column for the *Volkstem*. The origin of *The Mask* was Leipoldt's Afrikaans play, *Afgode*, written in 1928, the exact same time Leipoldt was writing *Galgsalmander* for weekly serialization in the *Huisgenoot*. The play reveals its anti-nationalist theme provocatively by examining miscegenation and political and moral duplicity in a very pointed fashion, quite explicitly drawing attention to its author's feelings on the political divide between members of the South African Party and the National Party. The play introduced many of the same characters that would appear in the novel and basically contains the same plot as *The Mask*. First performed in 1929 but written in 1928 (and published in book form in 1931) and earning a mild reputation as an early example of an

‘problem’ play in Afrikaans<sup>162</sup>, *Afgode* was overshadowed by Leipoldt’s other theatrical offering in 1929, *Die Laaste Aand*, a highly successful and acclaimed play and one that helped secure his Afrikaans literary standing. *Afgode* also corresponds with the regular column Leipoldt contributed in 1929 for the *Volkstem*, in which he spoke at length about what he felt was the overly aggressive nationalist lobbying for Afrikaans literature, which by implication also displayed his thoughts on Afrikaner nationalism.

### ***Caricature in The Mask***

In his journalistic writing, Leipoldt focused on the tension between South African Party supporters and National Party supporters and it is first and foremost the futility of their conflict that bothered him. Both parties, Leipoldt felt, were highly patriotic, but their disagreements promoted disharmony. His thoughts as expressed in these writings are given a fictional outlet in *The Mask*, with the uncovering of Elias’ secrets, and those of others connected to him, as well as the personal journey that Santa undergoes in the novel to be left shaken and uncertain by the end of it (the kind of stasis Leipoldt also showed Andrew Quakerley to be trapped in before his death in *Stormwrack*). It is Santa who must witness the unfolding of the old Biblical caution about worshipping false gods: if the Afrikaners saw their history as modeled on that of the Israelites through the events of The Great Trek (Merrington, 2003: 35), and elected themselves as God’s Chosen People, then Leipoldt also seems to accuse Afrikaners of elevating their leaders to God-like status. The religious theme is a necessary one, given Leipoldt’s understanding of how jealously the kind of Afrikaner he was writing about held to religion, and how nationalists in the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) used hierarchies in the church as an axis for their lobbying (Giliomee, 2003a: 384). By the first chapter of *The Mask*, the reader is already aware that, through his position in the Village, Elias Vantloo quickly became an Elder in the Church (Leipoldt, 2001: 520), although this is in sharp contrast to the way Nolte in *Gallows Gecko* earned the same seat. With the generational shift, Leipoldt seems to say, there is also a moral shift: the Church was esteemed by the characters in *Gallows Gecko*, and they saw it as a sacred site for personal and communal bonds that were mostly directed to the harmony between the people of the Valley and the land they lived on. In *The Mask*, the Church aids the negotiation of political prominence.

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<sup>162</sup> See Gray (2000b), p. 11

Elias is worshipped in both the play and the novel as a god by his daughter, and by those in the Village, and his is such a wicked, over-written caricature that, were it not for the abundance of melodrama, both *Afgode* and *The Mask* could have been today recognized as biting, almost hilarious satire. Vantloo is identified by the narrator in the *The Mask's* opening chapter as a usurer, greedy and smug:

Now, in his prosperity, Elias gave freely when he was asked, and by giving had earned for himself the reputation that comes from great wealth ostentatiously but skillfully suggested rather than openly displayed. He never gave gratuitously, exacting always a high rate of interest for money advanced, and he never advanced more than half the valuation of a property which he was called in to save.... Time, which had favoured Elias with worldly wealth, had not dealt kindly with his person. The thin-legged adolescent had grown into a fat, heavy, bloated man... and whose moroseness, the result of a self-consciousness, of social and intellectual inferiority, had given place to a smug complacency expressed in a smile in which self-satisfaction rather than altruistic cheerfulness was dominant. It is an expression often seen on the faces of men who acclaim themselves 'self-made', implying thereby that they have conquered difficulties by their own worth and work rather than with the assistance of chance and circumstance. The satisfaction of achievement, the sense of power that it gives and the moral fillip that it administers to characters inherently weak and sometimes as inherently vicious, brings with it a readjustment of social and individual values to which different individuals react differently. In Elias's case it made him arrogant without eradicating that primitive conception of his own inferiority which had lurked in him at the time when he had chafed under class restraint and envied the facility of younger boys in mastering the subjects for matriculation. In his youth he had learned the advantages of disguising his feelings where such disguise of benefit to him, and now, in his prosperity, he still aped a humility he really despised but on occasion found exceedingly useful. (Leipoldt, 2001: 518)

Appearances and marshalling of voters go together, as was proved by the National Party's successful gains through its appeals to poor white labourers: the National Party needed more white Afrikaners on its side, no matter where they came from or what their status was. Elias is drawn according to Leipoldt's critique of the National Party: he is deceptive and desperate, arrogant but secretly insecure. Later in *The Mask*, the concept of inferiority resurfaces when Mabuis claims that the lobbying for the Afrikaans language's full-scale national

implementation reveals a deep-seated inferiority complex and a childish defensiveness for something the lobbyists claim is under threat when in fact the language was already officially instituted alongside English.

Leipoldt's narrator also wastes little time in describing the means by which Elias Vantloo acquired his stately position in the District, and traces the character's rise to power back to the South African War, where he profited by supplying mobile services and transportation to the imperialists while at the same time claiming to be loyal to the Afrikaner cause. From the opening chapter of *The Mask*, Elias' history is explained by the astringent narrator and Elias is described as an opportunist who took advantage of the country's shift towards nationalism in the Afrikaans-speaking white population. The depiction of Elias as a coward is not very different from other assertions in Leipoldt's writing, such as *Gallows Gecko* (Leipoldt, 2001:44), *The Mask* (Leipoldt, 2001: 646) and *Bushveld Doctor* (Leipoldt, 1980: 169) in which the twentieth century Afrikaner is compared to the nineteenth century Voortrekker, and in Leipoldt's Valley community the Voortrekkers are seen as deserters by the characters Martin Rekker (in *Gallows Gecko*) and Gertrude Gerster (in *The Mask*). In rebelling during World War I<sup>163</sup>, there was another 'breaking away' of Afrikaners that inspired the narrative to Afrikaner nationhood, of creating a country for white, Afrikaans-speaking South Africans. *The Mask* is a fictional retort to these nationalist ideals. After meeting Mabuis, Santa is shocked by her father, who had always epitomised the passionate nationalism she swears by, actually agreeing with Mabuis' contention that South African Party and National Party members were fundamentally the same people, and informing her of the game of politics. He admits that much of what National Party leaders were spewing forth was only so much shop talk intended to keep the machine running (Leipoldt, 2001: 563). The young 'hothead' wishes to have the independent national flag that was lobbied for hoisted outside the Vantloo home; her father merely passes it off as unnecessary ornamentation. Through Elias' increasingly suspicious actions, Santa finds that the warnings and prophecies of the expatriate Mabuis begin to ring more true to her than she'd like to admit: that the nationalists were defining Afrikaner identity through mere empty popular sentiment, and that this would ultimately undermine them (Leipoldt, 2001:554, 558, 671 and 673).

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<sup>163</sup> Vantloo could be Leipoldt's ugly parody of passionate Afrikaner lobbyists like Hertzog. Leipoldt served valiantly on Botha and Smuts' side during World War I at the time that Hertzog defected, rebelled and led the charge towards aiding the growth of the National Party in the wake of the rebellion; see Giliomee (2003a), p. 381.

***Mabuis and Santa: two Leipoldts***

The first meeting between Santa and Mabuis takes place while she is entertaining guests over coffee, cake and cigarettes in her parents' home. Immediately the two become antagonistic, with Mabuis introduced as being, as Leipoldt had often been called, an 'apostle of the opposite view', and a willing and able opponent for Santa's hotheadedness. The topic of patriotism is introduced almost immediately after their salutations and the other guests, the Burens, who had brought Mabuis to the Vantloo home, and Eric, eagerly anticipate a showdown.

The debaters, Santa and Mabuis, can be read as two incarnations of Leipoldt himself. Santa's impatience and fanatical tone recall the younger Leipoldt, working as a journalist for pro-Boer newspapers during the South African War – brash and opinionated with a tendency to immediately categorise and label those not in his favour, and resolutely passionate about whichever cause he defends. Mabuis is the older Leipoldt, well-travelled and identifying himself as a cosmopolitan with a mixed heritage, and never succumbing to temper even in heated debate, he is cool, debonair and crisply articulate. However, between Santa and Mabuis, there is more of a suggestion of juxtaposition between a disjointed self, two parts of the author's persona. Kannemeyer's definitive biography on Leipoldt (1999) closely follows Leipoldt's movements in the 1920s, particularly his time in the Transvaal and his move back to the Cape by the mid-1920s. Leipoldt's time in Transvaal is itself notable for the transition Leipoldt made from rural South African life, when he was the medical inspector for isolated schools in the rural north (his time as the "Bushveld Doctor") and witness to what he describes in his memoirs as a lost period of South African history, to the city centre of Pretoria, the hub of Afrikanerdom. There he would be in regular contact with many of the foremost literary figures of the day but would not necessarily enjoy meetings with them, counting the majority of his friends among English-speaking medical practitioners (Kannemeyer, 1999: 437). He had often uncomfortable interactions with figures it was taken for granted he would have good relations with, like Gustav Preller. Kannemeyer's biography shares a picture of Leipoldt as being somewhat impatient and uninterested in being part of a literary set, remaining close only with selected figures like J.J. Smit, who wrote the famous introduction to *Oom Gert Vertel en Ander Gedigte*, and the journalist Markus Viljoen. Leipoldt would also maintain certain routines, such as playing bridge with close friends or dining at the Diners' Club in Pretoria (Kannemeyer, 1999: 412). He seemed to invest far greater value in his medical practice and school inspection, and taking into care numerous



young boys who were either orphaned or out of school. However, he had enough faith in himself to follow his political convictions and as a South African Party member he ran for the party chair in the Wonderboom district elections in 1924, although soon afterwards the South African Party lost ground there in national elections to the National Party and its coalition with the Labour Party to form the Pact Government (Kannemeyer, 1999: 484).

His move back to Cape Town in 1925 saw him return to an environment he fitted into more readily, and a return to the more colourful and typical outdoor cafes and restaurants (Kannemeyer, 1999: 491) – as venues for business meetings and socialising – that he had first encountered as a teenager upon leaving Clanwilliam, when he was taken in to the company of the likes of John Merriman. Although he was a regular at the popular Koffiehuis (Kannemeyer, 1999: 491) canteen, and would strike close friendships with Cape Town journalists, Leipoldt once more eschewed being caught up in literary circles too frequently. He tended to prefer the company of children over adults by using his Kenilworth home, Arbury, as an educational haven for young, orphaned boys, going on to adopt two such boys as his sons (Kannemeyer, 1999). He would also set up a medical practice specialising in pediatrics.

However, common to both Leipoldt's Transvaal and Cape experiences in the 1920s is the way he seemed to regard the social gatherings of his peers which included speeches, poetry readings and book launches as events he did not need to attend,. Here both the Santa and Mabuis aspects of his personality seem to emerge. Viljoen (1953: 152-161) identifies the mischievous Leipoldt, who took delight in courting controversy at dinner parties, balls and large gatherings. Often hosting dinner parties at Arbury and generally impressing guests with his culinary skill and old-fashioned dining etiquette, Leipoldt chose these settings as the outlet for some of his most notorious and provocative remarks. At such events, Viljoen notes, Leipoldt would take delight in confusing and beguiling everyone present with his complex personality. The patrician, gentlemanly Mabuis would be setting a stylish table for guests, but during the meal the controversial Santa would emerge with extreme remarks and observations. The considerate host Leipoldt would allow for Christian prayers of thanks to be said over food, but soon the mischievous Leipoldt could follow with claims of being a Buddhist (1953: 155, 160).

Given Santa and Mabuis' National Party and South African Party discourses, Leipoldt's politics also played themselves out in similar fashion to the way these two characters debate certain issues in *The Mask* – but Viljoen (1953) notes that sometimes Leipoldt would embody both identities (South African Party supporter and National Party supporter) at the same time: in one night, to certain guests at a dinner party, he would claim to be proudly South African Party, while to others he was a nationalist. Leipoldt's beguiling personality and diverse range of interests always seemed to serve only the purpose of shocking or confusing those around him or, at best, alienating them from knowing any one fixed Leipoldt persona, yet it also stands to reason that Leipoldt always seemed to be querying his era and contemporaries from different angles – what he couldn't find out through journalistic investigation he seemed to pursue through medical science; what he dismissed in adults he seemed to nurture in children; when his professionalism was not noted or acknowledged, he was willing to express himself though blunt and crude statements; when he fell short of saying anything constructive in his role as a teacher (or part-time lecturer at the University of Cape Town), he would indulge in wild generalisations; if no-one paid attention to his opinions on culture and local history, he seemed equally ready to convey the same ideas through food preparation and wine selection, attaching a motive and a reason, or at least a story, to almost anything he did.

Santa may be rurally located and from a wealthy family, but the concluding truth is that, although she is striking in the *Valley* trilogy for being a strong, career-minded female character, she is from a shamed family whose wealth had been irresponsibly lost, and her higher education and early advances as a medical practitioner had been secretly funded by the man she would marry. Her nationalism is based on stubbornness and her idol, her father, is a fraud. She is caught between a desire to impact on history and an eventual uncertainty as to her role in it that marks her out as the most modern character in Leipoldt's trilogy, the one person who feels the weight of the Valley's history after circumstances force her to accept it, and the one person who, standing in a rapidly changing world showing the breaks between the new and the old, stares directly into a future that seems unwelcome.

### ***Imagined communities***

In the introduction of this thesis, I drew on Benedict Anderson's analysis of the formation of nationalism in many countries to discuss nationalist politics in early twentieth century South Africa. To Anderson, nationalism could be classified as an ideology, a concept that is imagined because the members of a nation would mostly be unknown to one another; they

co-exist by mentally shaping “the image of their communion” (Anderson, 1983: 15). Citizens of a nation follow the trajectories and accoutrements set out by the largely mythical (imagined) nation-building story that becomes the story of a people, the “deep, horizontal comradeship” (Anderson, 1983: 16) that explains why there are those willing to die for their country. Focusing on the role of news media, Anderson goes on to explain a working example of an imagined community: people (in, for instance, a town, or a city, or even a country) following a daily routine of reading a newspaper inevitably imagine that others, like themselves, are following the same routine. These readers are essentially imagining a community of other readers, perhaps reading their newspaper at the same time with the same reaction to certain headlines and articles; at no point could it be clear to one reader what another, unseen reader is experiencing but the assumption is made that the many unseen others are as one with the reader making the assumption. A community that is linked by a simple practice, perhaps ritual, is imagined – a social grouping has been forged and the mindset of the individual links itself to the “mass individual” mindset, and a kind of national or communal thinking is the result (Anderson, 1983: 37-39).

Naturally, the content of the newspaper is as important as the routine that reinforces it, and Anderson traces a path back to ancient cultures, or what he calls “sacred communities” (Anderson, 1983: 28): extremely religious communities of the ancient world who possibly founded the roots for nationalism. Anderson cites Gellner, who finds that extreme beliefs, shared by a group of people, become practices that “invent(s) nations when they do not exist” (Gellner, 1964: 169). This “founding” of what could later be construed as nationalisms, which also lends itself to affinities with creationism (itself a useful appropriation to the Afrikaner nationalist myth) is, in Anderson’s study, largely based on both the scarce (or lost, to augment the idea of myth and legend) religious written documents left over from the ancient world, texts that largely spoke of massive communities in Christianity, Islam and Buddhism, to name a few examples. The oral traditions and iconography of these older worlds, such as the “reliefs and stained-glass windows of medieval churches, or the paintings of Italian and Flemish masters” (Anderson, 1983: 28) also contributed to the “figuring of the imagined reality” of those worlds (1983: 29). This imagined reality seemed to operate on the idea of simultaneity: with the apocalypse or the Second Coming of Christ always seemingly imminent in the older world’s Christendom. The religious iconography of the Old World, in Anderson’s assessment, is highly important in the creation of the stories nations could be founded on. This is in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries replaced by the novel and the

newspaper in what Walter Benjamin describes as “homogeneous, empty time” (Benjamin, 1973: 265), namely the idea that events within a community occur at the same time, and occur coincidentally. In modernist literature this is sometimes represented through fragmentation of subjectivity and split-narrative story-telling. A link between the novel and the technique of story-telling in a newspaper can be identified: certain persistent, episodic stories may generate a following with a certain newspaper’s readership, indicating that the story is alive, that it is, for lack of a better term, popular, but if the story disappears from the pages of the newspaper after some time, it does not necessarily indicate that the story is ‘dead’ by any means – it merely continues outside of the pages of the newspaper, outside of the public knowledge about it and at any point, like a character in a novel, it may re-appear (Anderson, 1983: 37).

If a newspaper with a settled, easily identifiable readership prints an article that posits something disagreeable to the mindset of their readers, perhaps describing the movements of a political party that acts against the grain of the imagined beliefs of the newspaper’s readers, those readers would then be united through their mutual indignation and condemnation of the common enemy. The newspaper would have succeeded in reinforcing, perhaps even extending the community of its readers, who would be readily identified as opponents of the political party reported on. The success of this depends on terms set in the plural: ‘they’ reinforces the struggle metaphor of ‘us against them’, and that easily a common enemy has been shown to a reader of the newspaper, who would then take the ‘us’ (which would most likely have craftily been defined on the appropriation of the singular – for instance, the newspaper may have sympathetically made mention of one of its readers’ reaction to something the antagonist political party did – and imagine his or her common alliances, as if all the other readers were similarly affected).

The National Party appealed to its followers through a description of Afrikaners as original white Africans having endured struggle and sacrifice for their nationhood. The party could cite the history of the Great Trek as the roots of the modern Afrikaner journey and claim Afrikaans as the new language of the people<sup>164</sup> and the Dutch Reformed Church assisted in perpetuating the notion of divine right. The National Party could refer to the South African

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<sup>164</sup> Gustav Preller, in his campaigning for the recognition of Afrikaans, considered it as a key device to transporting Afrikaners into modernity; see Giliomee (2003a), p. 372

War as an injustice to Afrikaners and claim their modern project as a means of righting the wrongs of the past:

The Afrikaner's source of power was allegiance to South Africa as their only fatherland. Hertzog called the Afrikaners 'pioneers' of South Africa. With ancestry in Dutch, French and German, the Afrikaner was never heard to proclaim his faith in either.  
(Giliomee, 2003a: 350)

The Afrikaner was indeed seen as a pioneering type – an original white African – by an international audience (Giliomee, 2003a: 350) that saw the South African nation and identity personified by this 'new' species that, in its own mind, looked European but was African. The imaginative scope read heroically: like the Boer tended to the farmland, he could cultivate and master the country.

By the 1920s, the South African Party and the National Party were the major representatives of the dominant two white groups in South Africa (Giliomee, 2003a: 348). Under Smuts, who led the Boer commandos into the Cape Colony during the South African War, South African Party followers were mostly oriented towards ideals of unity between English and Afrikaans-speaking South Africans that Smuts would strive for all his life (Giliomee, 2003a: 347). In Britain, Smuts had captured the imagination as someone who pursued the unification of white South Africa with great determination in the years immediately following the South African War and it was also well known that Smuts thought highly enough of English culture and its language to promote it among his followers. Afrikaners who supported Smuts were mostly affluent and well educated (Giliomee, 2003a: 348), with a similar predisposition to see Britain as a cultural centre.<sup>165</sup>

Hertzog and the National Party wanted an Afrikaner South Africa, without any links to Europe or England. The National Party would progressively build up momentum through the

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<sup>165</sup> In *The Mask*, the character Gertrude blasts Republicans for having "no tradition", while another character, Dr Buren, states: "... you cannot create tradition by act of parliament..." See Leipoldt (2001), p. 546, 579. These are responses to Santa's heated argument for Afrikaner nationalism being cowed, or bullied, by English culture. This is an argument Leipoldt takes serious issue with, as he expresses through Dr Buren and Pierre Mabuis that Santa's argument is typical of the nationalists: childish and defensive of imagined slights against them. Here, an example of the imagined communities Anderson speaks of could be appropriated and extended to Leipoldt's grievance. He argues against Santa's imagined hurt, a result of the rhetoric employed by the popular lobbyists that was at heart anti-English.

1910s through a series of events and negotiations that secured their standing with many Afrikaners: the 1913 Native Land Act that unfairly divided land between whites and “non-whites”, the 1914 motion put forth by Langenhoven for the implementation of Afrikaans as a language of instruction at school level and perhaps most significantly, the party’s appeal to the large number of poor whites in South Africa, favouring them for labour to the disadvantage of more skilled, and more numerous (as well as cheaper), “non-whites” (Merrington, 2003: 35). By 1926, the National Party had succeeded in securing the promise of the Balfour Declaration, which in the 1931 Statute of Westminster would grant equality between Britain and the dominions (Merrington, 2003: 35). It was also at this time that D.F. Malan – who would be the great leader of the extreme Nationalists of the 1930s – clamoured for a “clean” flag<sup>166</sup> to replace the Union Jack (Giliomee, 2003a: 397).

When the National Party was formed in 1914 under Hertzog, it immediately set about trying to establish a mouthpiece for itself, which came in the form of *De Burger* (soon to be changed to *Die Burger*), an Afrikaans daily that came into being when J.H. Marais of Stellenbosch rebuked the South African Party for denying an authentic Afrikaans newspaper (Giliomee, 2003a: 375), the kind of publication not pre-occupied with the mantra of conciliation that Botha and Smuts were constantly promulgating, which to Afrikaners meant nothing more than conciliation along *English* lines. Marais financially supported the establishment of the newspaper under Nasionale Pers (NasPers), which would from then on oversee all major distribution of mostly Afrikaans fiction and non-fiction. D.F. Malan assumed editorial duties and immediately ensured that *De Burger* was akin to the Bible in terms of its importance to daily Afrikaner life: the very issues of national identity and empowerment that were at the core of the National Party was to be promulgated by *De Burger*, and Malan, head of the Western Cape National Party, secured the newspaper’s base in the Cape, where mostly English publications had enjoyed success. The highly respected Professor J.J. Smit was soon brought in to oversee quality management of *De Burger*’s weekly magazine off-shoot, *De Huisgenoot* (The Household Companion), which quickly became the *Huisgenoot*; soon all walks of Afrikaner life were taught and educated in claiming their own cultural empowerment on a daily and weekly basis through the content of

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<sup>166</sup> This ornamentalism seems based on differentiating between Afrikaners and English, what Merrington calls “a range of Afrikaner nationalist symbolic initiatives [that] were undertaken to loosen the bonds of Empire”, including “the introduction of a national flag to fly alongside the British Union flag, a national anthem, new language policies for the public service and for education” as well as mandates directed through the print media of the *Burger* and the *Huisgenoot* aimed at promoting a design for an Afrikaner life; see Merrington (2003), p. 35.

*De Burger* and *De Huisgenoot*, the latter which became popularly known as “The People’s University” (Giliomee, 2003a: 375). The National Party project of lobbying for Afrikaans as an official language was certainly in operation, and writers like C. J. Langenhoven and Leipoldt were soon involved, with Langenhoven writing casually but consistently for the *Burger* (before the regular *Aan Stille Waters* column which started in 1922) and Leipoldt writing similarly for the *Huisgenoot*, where his friend Smit was working in earnest to guarantee that top writers contributed. As mentioned earlier, it was almost standard practice for writers of Leipoldt and Langenhoven’s calibre to be called upon to contribute copy to Afrikaans publications. In light of Leipoldt’s using his journalistic role to argue against expeditious and excessive fostering of Afrikaans, his friendship with Smit, who was almost certainly crusading for the full realisation of Afrikaans in ways that Leipoldt could not always agree with, must have been conflicting. Furthermore, it was Smit’s famous introduction to *Oom Gert Vertel en Ander Gedigte* that popularly marked Leipoldt out as a *volk* poet, an identity that is not highly compatible with Leipoldt’s fiction in the *Valley* trilogy.

For all the National Party’s efforts at establishing an Afrikaans literature and an Afrikaans readership, there was still no serious body of Afrikaans literature by 1925, the year Afrikaans became the other official language of South Africa, thereby supplanting Dutch. Even Smit conceded that due to its meagre literary output, Afrikaans could not yet exist without Dutch (Giliomee, 2003: 377a), which is what Leipoldt had been saying all along in the 1920s if his newspaper pieces from that decade are to be believed (Leipoldt, 1990).

In this context, Leipoldt’s opposition to attempts to nationalise literature can be seen to be an active opposition in that he directly criticised what he considered to be poor quality literary efforts published to mobilise an Afrikaans readership. In doing so, he did not only use his column to write reviews on poor books but also targeted stellar writers who were usually revered.

### ***Leipoldt’s journalistic writing during the 1920s***

In both the Transvaal and, later, Cape Town, Leipoldt wrote a regular column in the *Volkstem*, *Diwagaties van Oom Gert*. With the name he gave to this weekly column, Leipoldt obviously drew on his most famous character, the speaker of his seminal poem, *Oom Gert Vertel*, and it may not be amiss to say that in doing so, Leipoldt seemed reconciled to the popular perception of Oom Gert as an Afrikaner story-teller. As stated earlier in this project,



Oom Gert was often seen by a predominantly white Afrikaner readership in the 1910s as a voice for an embittered nation, looking back with a sense of loss at the events of the South African War, looking back at the perceived loss of a culture and identity and the intimate bond with landscape that helped define this identity (the bulk of the *Oom Gert Vertel en Ander Gedigte* collection, as stated earlier, was made up of poems celebrating nature, not lamenting war). Perhaps playing on the idea that Oom Gert was his alter ego, or at least a name he was intimately associated with, Leipoldt aimed at drawing readers to his column: “their” famous Uncle Gert had more to say, and they could read him every week to gain more of his wisdom by way of his divagations.<sup>167</sup>

Leipoldt’s *Oom Gert* column offered opinions on topics as diverse as medicine, literature, domestic practices for housewives, culinary tips and of course, political discourse. True to his didactic predilection, Leipoldt’s writing in this column, which he may have hoped would also have a following with younger readers, makes him out to be a talkative “uncle” figure, someone with a broad general knowledge who set out to educate, first and foremost. The column was a culmination of his journalistic writing from the late 1910s, when he contributed to the *Brandwag* and the *Huisgenoot* with pieces that drew attention to his sense of his own maturity, or his awareness of his role as a wiser, older writer, a father of Afrikaans poetry and a passionate medical practitioner who seldom hesitated to frame a discussion on literature and culture in medical terms and vice versa. The Leipoldt of the late 1910s and early 1920s set about trying to take ‘fragments’ of a national identity and unify them into a whole, a ‘bigger picture’ for his readers to see. The state of the country, he seemed to say, was like a human body separate from its brain: it depended on food, but spent too much time on designating certain foods or cooking practices to certain cultures; it depended on other human bodies to survive, but instead tried as far as it could to separate human beings from each other through race; it wanted to be healthy but instead was poisoning itself with poor rhetoric; it wanted to live in a clean, functioning home but instead it sabotaged the land this home needed to rest on<sup>168</sup>. Leipoldt in this column was as didactic as the Leipoldt of later years, and in wearing so many hats (friend to the housewives, friendly doctor to the children, savage critic of Afrikaans literature, upholder of the cosmopolitan view), this “uncle” figure was, somewhat paradoxically, settling into the trend of Afrikaans writing at the time as Leipoldt was far from

<sup>167</sup> Leipoldt’s proposed title for his English memoir, *Bushveld Doctor*, was *Divagations of a Bush Doctor*, perhaps indicating a fondness from Leipoldt for this unusual word; see Gray (2000a), p. 3-10

<sup>168</sup> See Kannemeyer (ed.) (1989), p. 68-75 and Leipoldt (1990), p. 5-8

the only writer to promulgate a design for life for Afrikaans readers – in fact, this was very much part of the nation-building project set forth by both the National Party and the South African Party. By the end of the 1920s Leipoldt, still being an “uncle” of sorts, would lash out at what he identified as the imposition of substandard Afrikaans literary contributions aimed squarely at promoting the language, alongside the kind of magazine, household guide and general “life design” writing that he had practised throughout the 1910s and 1920s. The *Oom Gert* column, which would later be edited by the Voortrekker-obsessed Preller, was merely more space for Leipoldt to continue his preaching to the “volk” of South Africa, and the South African Party naturally enough thought Leipoldt an important enough figure to contribute to their own take on the nation-building project (Kannemeyer, 1999: 468). Langenhoven’s Cape Town-based column *Aan Stille Waters*, for the *Burger*, fed the National Party propaganda machine and would surely have been incentive enough for Leipoldt’s column at this particular point in the 1920s (1923-1925, and 1926-1931).

Leipoldt’s column was consistent in trying to offer a sober, academic view on what he identified as the lobbying for mainstream usage of Afrikaans based on political agitation that was at heart anti-English. If the political scenery was changing, he seemed to say, it should change slowly, giving the cultural development of language enough time to come into its own. Putting aside his characteristic brashness, Leipoldt even conceded, as he would in *The Mask* when Mabuis as well as Elias offer the same sentiment, that between nationalists and members of the South African Party, to which Leipoldt aligned himself, there was very little to choose from regarding their outlook for the future of white South Africa. Perhaps, in saying this, Leipoldt was also emphasising that both parties tried to pursue that outlook at the expense of all “non-white” South Africans, and the appearance of *Aya Minah* to both the play and the novel seems to underscore this. Observe the sensitive but cautionary tone he applies in one of his pieces, *Ons Letterkunde* (Our Literature):

Die tyd is verby om aan die jongeres te se: ‘Handhaaf jou taal—  
die taal is gans die volk...’ Ons dink glad nie aan die inboorlinbevolking  
as faktor in die kulturele ontwikkeling van die land nie....(Leipoldt, 1990: 39)

The time has passed to tell the younger ones: ‘Nurture your language—  
the language is the people...’ We do not think in any respect of the native  
populace as a factor in the the cultural development of the country...

Inserted into an otherwise arresting and complex argument for how Afrikaans literature ought to be assessed, especially in terms of school education, Leipoldt also launches a thinly veiled attack on the nationalism of C.J. Langenhoven, whom he clearly sees as a prominent literary figure leading the cultural push for the Afrikaans language on the basis of anti-English agitation:

Om die wille van sukses sal ons dan maar moet stilbly oor die  
sentimente kinderagtigheid van 'Die Stem van Suid-Afrika'...  
wat nou vir ons mense opgehou word as ['n] letterkundige [voorbeeld]  
wat navolging werd is. (Leipoldt, 1990: 39-40)

For the sake of success then we will just have to keep quiet about  
the sentimental childishness of 'The Voice of South Africa'...  
which is now being upheld for our people as [a] literary [example]  
that is worth imitating..

A war of words would ensue<sup>169</sup> between the two writers, a war somewhat punctuated by Leipoldt dismissing the lyrics of Langenhoven's ode *Die Stem van Suid-Afrika* (*The Voice of South Africa*), which would later be set to music to become the national anthem of South Africa until 1994, after which only its opening verse was incorporated in post-apartheid South Africa's polyglotous new national anthem. Langenhoven's assertion that "die taal is gans die volk" (the language is the people) (Langenhoven, quoted in Giliomee, 2003a: 11) has its nationalistic appeal emphasised by *Die Stem's* appropriation of natural scenery as a site for the patriotic sentiment felt by all South Africans who are proud of their country, although it does not escape Leipoldt that the natural scenery in *Die Stem* is exclusively set aside for white Afrikaners. He, a celebrated nature poet himself, criticises what he calls the unimaginative, saccharine quality of Langenhoven's lyrics, an example of what he described as the substandard literature used to promote Afrikaans. Leipoldt went so far as to imply, without any factual basis, that *Die Stem* was plagiarised from Kipling's *The Native Born* (Kannemeyer, 1999: 476). This kind of agitation on the part of Leipoldt became a regular feature of his critical writing towards the end of the 1920s, and Langenhoven was singled out a few times:

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<sup>169</sup> Leipoldt and Langenhoven's public disagreements started in 1919 and carried through the 1920s. In a forthcoming essay I discuss their disagreements in more detail.

[Afrikaans] sal bly of dit sal wegsink; en of dit sal bly en of  
dit sal wegsink, hang nie af van die taal-jingoes nie.  
(Kannemeyer, 1999: 474)

[Afrikaans] will stay or it will die away; and whether  
it stays or dies away does not depend on the language-jingoes

The above quotation was Leipoldt's response, in an article in May 1926 to what he felt was Langenhoven's role in the incorporation of Afrikaans as an instructional language at school level, a move Leipoldt felt was premature and at the expense of Dutch, which although older and bound to more cultural heritage and history, was now being replaced and superseded. Kannemeyer feels Leipoldt counted Langenhoven as one of the 'language-jingoes' (1999: 474).

This personal war with arguably the most recognised Afrikaans writer of the time was a culmination of a long decade of difference between Leipoldt's South African Party, led by Jan Smuts, and the National Party, then led by Smuts' erstwhile military comrade J.B.M. Hertzog, who could count on the support of Langenhoven.

That Langenhoven's equally acrid responses to Leipoldt made an impression can be seen in 1932, when he again haunts Leipoldt's writing. A diary entry written the day Langenhoven died finds Leipoldt scathingly dismissive of someone he describes as a populist 'third-rater' with no artistic merit<sup>170</sup>, and Leipoldt clearly has Langenhoven in mind in his essay for the *Cambridge History of The British Empire* when he discusses Afrikaner figures who nurture the growth of their language on anti-English protest (Leipoldt, 1936: 861, 868). An earlier diary entry, one in which Langenhoven is assessed as a "fool not worth powder or shot" (Kannemeyer, 1999: 477) is recalled in the completed 1932 typescript for *The Mask*, in which the same statement is afforded to Elias Vantloo (Leipoldt, 2001: 600). It follows that the characterisation of Vantloo owes heavily to Leipoldt's thoughts on Langenhoven at the time, with the naïve Santa at one point exclaiming: "A language is the soul of the people – it is the people!", to which the expatriate Mabuis replies: "That is another of these cant phrases which politicians use when they have nothing tangible to propose." (Leipoldt, 2001: 552)

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<sup>170</sup> See Gray (2000a), p. 8

***Ons Letterkunde (Our Literature)***

Using his position as a literary critic, Leipoldt launched his cosmopolitan argument against nationalist sectionalism with his most ardent campaigning yet by focusing the argument on literature. Perhaps viewing himself as an authority, he criticises popular sentiment time and again as being a destructive force in the education of young people. Some of the books offered at school level were, to Leipoldt, purely sentimental choices (1990: 32), saccharine examples of Afrikaans literature aimed at a readership with a limited imaginative scope. In light of the ‘poor white’ issue contributing to the larger part of the National Party-affiliated Afrikaners, Leipoldt’s writing, so often speaking to an intellectual Cape liberal imagination, faced the challenge of converting the poor white ‘masters’<sup>171</sup>, who at best were struggling to appreciate a classic, well rounded literary training. Leipoldt’s aim, perhaps following from his earlier piece, *Die Kuns om te Lees* (The Art of Reading), was to build a nation through the written word – or at the very least, to get a nation to read. His protest was that the art of reading had been lost because the quality of books was now affected by the National Party’s drive to get the nation to read Afrikaans: popular sentiment was superseding literary value. The term sentiment here extends to Leipoldt’s warning that the Nationalists were themselves gaining power through appeals to sentiment, usually by holding the South African War as the trump card that inspired emotion when it was appealed to as the event that forever changed Afrikaner culture. The danger of establishing culture on sentiment, to Leipoldt’s mind, was always close by. The debate went further in *The Mask*, when Santa is told off by the French-Argentine-South African Mabuis for holding too strongly to sentiment in her pro-nationalist arguments to those she considers as being South African Party supporters:

‘You wish to make us speak in the future entirely in the mother tongue, but in your efforts to be heroic you lose sight of the fact that in daily life it is not sentiment that counts, but something else.’

‘Sentiment does count, Mr Mabuis,’ interrupted Santa vigorously.  
 ‘Especially with us. If you knew more about your country, you would agree with me that it is sentiment—pure sentiment and nothing else—that has brought about the present state of affairs. It is because the old Party, your Party—for I suppose you are SAP, for only an SAP would talk like that—made no allowance for sentiment, because it thought,

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<sup>171</sup> In *The Mask*, Jeremiah remarks: ‘The poor white is becoming our master’; see Leipoldt (2001), p. 646

like you, that something else counts, that it was swept away and will remain in darkness until it alters its opinion and lives up to its principles.’

‘My dear young lady, you take altogether too much for granted. I am not SAP. I belong to no party, for I am expatriated. Were I living here I rather think I should count myself a Nationalist, for there is today no difference between the principles of the old SAP and modern nationalism...’

‘Yes, there is. This difference of sentiment.’

‘Instead of writing... purely literary books, you are producing propaganda literature, and you are using your schools, your universities, and your cultural centres for the dissemination of propaganda, not culture.’ (Leipoldt, 2001:557-559)

Locked in another heated discussion later in the novel with the Irish-South African Dr Buren, the issue of sentiment re-emerges in Santa’s complaints:

‘...If anybody has a grievance, it is the Afrikaans-speaking citizen. He sees his language constantly slighted, his ideals trod underfoot, his aspirations thwarted... It is high time we asserted ourselves, unless we wish to be swamped by English culture.’

‘That is because you persist in thinking that English and Afrikaans cultures are necessarily antagonistic... Your South African nationalism is purely sectional for you refuse to credit us, who do not speak Afrikaans, with an equally strong sentiment. Yet it exists, and it existed long before you made language and culture the test of a true national South African sentiment.... You must realize yourself that there would be very little of this ill-feeling if we could only get away from persons and platitudes and concentrate upon the big things.’

‘They are big things to me,’ asserted Santa, stoutly. ‘Sentiment is a big thing, Doctor. Since I came back I have repeatedly witnessed what you call conciliation—what your old Party harped on in and out of season—is expected from us, not the other side. It’s we who have to give everything, and when, once in a while we take things, we are accused of stirring up race hatred.’

‘There’s something in that,’ admitted Buren. ‘But the conciliation business came from what you call the other side. After all, what was it but sentiment that gave us Union? That made Botha our first Prime Minister? I agree it was

a mistake, but it came from our side. Yours has done precious little to follow it up, and has remained very much a one-sided affair.' (Leipoldt, 2001: 577-78)

In Part I of *Ons Letterkunde*, Leipoldt makes a strong argument against prescribed Afrikaans texts in schools, lamenting that a group of schoolboys he had recently been in contact with could not suitably impress him with their literary knowledge – he dismisses their enthusiasm for Galsworthy, Conrad and Meredith and criticises the school system for not teaching them Fielding, Austen and Hardy (more evidence of his preference for nineteenth century literature). No doubt embarking on a patrician hobbyhorse, Leipoldt goes on to suggest that these schoolboys would most likely find literary greatness in Langenhoven's *Ons Weg Deur Die Wêreld* (Leipoldt, 1990: 31-32). Discussing the wide difference between a book that provides reading pleasure (he cites the works of Edgar Wallace as an example) and one that can be regarded as having literary merit, Leipoldt's source of grievance, as it would resurface in *The Mask*, is the denial of European literature in the schooling system, in favour of hastening the growth of Afrikaans:

Terwyl ons die Engelse letterkunde maar al te sleg ken, weet ons nog minder, of glad niks, van die groot letterkunde van die Vasteland nie.  
(Leipoldt, 1990: 33)

While we know the English literature all too poorly, we know even less, or altogether nothing, of the great literature of the Continent.

Again, this concern around literature is manifest in other forms as well. This may be explored through Mabuis' statement in *The Mask* when he discusses the changing role of the Church in South Africa. The emphasis is on the agency of the Church in assisting sectarian politics, although Leipoldt also clearly has his own father in mind when describing the pastors of old:

'...You must admit that while in the old days the *predikant* was a highly cultured individual who stood as a centre from which practically all culture radiated... formerly the parson had to have a special dispensation. He was trained to work in the East, and had to obtain his *Acte Classicale* before he could accept a parish here. That meant not only a university education in Europe, with its sound classical scholarship, but also a special preliminary study of Arabic and Syriac. What average *predikant* can look back on such a training today?' (Leipoldt, 2001: 556)



Leipoldt infiltrates Mabuis' words with his own life experience (or, at least, the memory of his father), and at this point his novel of ideas seems more and more an expounding of an elite nineteenth century idea of culture. In defending these classically trained preachers and attacking what could only be the theological core that was at work for extreme nationalists by the 1920s and 1930s<sup>172</sup>, Leipoldt is emphasizing his stand against moral degeneration through this patrician frame. An erudite preacher brings with him worldly influences that enlarge a moral scope of things to his parish; a preacher with political aims narrows the worldview of his community, making them resistant to foreign influence. This is then the same for Leipoldt's take on the literature Afrikaners were reading in the 1920s.

In *Ons Letterkunde's* second part, Leipoldt compares the tertiary schooling support body *Akademie vir Afrikaans* with the *English Association*. He cites the latter as a better model for promoting a full understanding of literature among school pupils in that it amalgamated literature with language in a way that was more pedagogically sound than the *Akademie*, which hosted annual Eisteddfods that gave exposure to literature of a poor quality (Leipoldt, 1990: 34). Lacking in the Afrikaans imagination, Leipoldt argued, was the ability to judge by comparison the progress of Afrikaans literature to English, as well as the inability or unwillingness of Afrikaans literary practitioners to be self-critical. The Eisteddfods he lambasted contained judiciary panels which included members that were themselves not fit to adjudicate literary prize-givings (in Leipoldt's estimation), and other members who actually took part in the competition. This Leipoldt attacks for being morally degenerate as well as self-congratulatory (1990: 35), and he further intimates that many Afrikaner literary figures who believed themselves important enough to judge literary events were themselves unable to digest criticism of their own work – perhaps, at the time of writing this second part, Leipoldt had read Langenhoven's recent charge against him for 'persecuting' one of his own kind. An improved *Akademie*, modeled on the English Association, would, however, also be a challenge for a variety of reasons:

'n Letterkundige vereeniging moet, in die eerste plek, bestaan uit  
persone wat bevoegd is om mekaar te kritiseer... Die eerste beswaar  
teen so 'n voorstel is natuurlik dat ons, wat skrywers is, algar baie

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<sup>172</sup> This is a reference to the influential role played by the Dutch Reformed Church in nationalist policies; see Begg (2011), pp. 144, 149-150

gevoelig en prikkelbaar is. Ons verdra nie kritiek nie, veral nie van mededingers nie. Sommiges van ons maak, as hulle boeke nie na hulle sin geresenseer word nie, dadelike aan die wêreld bekend dat hulle nooit in der ewigheid ooit weer sal toelaat dat 'n boek van hulle deur 'n koerantskrywer geresenseer word nie. (1990: 35)

A literary union should, in the first place, be comprised of persons qualified to criticize one another...The first objection to such a proposal is that we, who are writers, are very sensitive and touchy. We do not tolerate criticism, especially not from other critics. Some of us, if their books aren't reviewed to their satisfaction, immediately make it clear to the world that never in eternity will they ever again allow a book of theirs to be reviewed by a journalist.

Clear references to Langenhoven aside, Leipoldt's depiction of defensive writers seems every bit a preparation of sorts for the way he would depict Santa in *The Mask*. The link between the nameless writers he lambasts and this central character in his English fiction emphasizes the strong feeling Leipoldt reserved for matters of art and culture, and certainly he was distressed that parallels were being forged between nationalism and literature. He is every bit as harsh about these over-sensitive writers as his omniscient narrator is critical of Elias and (to a lesser extent) Santa in *The Mask*. To both this category of Afrikaner writer and to Santa, advice is issued about the importance of comparison:

Daar is die onder ons wat nie gedien is met opbouende kritiek nie... Hulle verdra nie vergelykings nie. En tog is dit deur vergelyking, deur teenstelling en studie van punte van ooreenkoms tussen twee letterkundige produkte, dat ons die meeste nut kan kry uit wat ons kritiek noem. (1990: 36)

There are those among us not satisfied with constructive criticism... They do not tolerate comparisons. And yet it is through comparison, through cross-examination and study of points of similarity between two literary products, that we can achieve the most worth of what we call criticism.

and

‘I have seen something of the world, Mr Mabuis, and I have never seen anything better than this. Tell me where you can better it, if you can.’

‘If you could come to the Argentine,’ said the stranger, smilingly, ‘I could show you what you cannot see here. One compares, and one contrasts. That is the only way.’ (Leipoldt, 2001: 549)

Mabuis’ discourse to Santa is predominantly based on comparison. Among other things, he asks her to compare South Africa to England (“a country which can hardly claim to have a civilized status in comparison with the authority which it displaces” (Leipoldt, 2001: 551), the German constitution to the South African constitution (2001: 551), Serbian nationalism to South African nationalism (2001: 553) and the National Party to the South African Party (2001: 557-8). Similarly, in *Ons Letterkunde*, Leipoldt pleads for Afrikaans language development at school level to be modelled on the English example, and he calls for more English prescribed school texts at the expense of the Afrikaans ones (1990: 34-5). He also discerns between comparison and competition when he warns against the temptation of trying to make Afrikaans compete against languages with established literatures and traditions (1990: 40).

When the overtly patrician point of view reflected by characters in the *Valley* trilogy is considered, their discourses fall in line with much of the dominant South African Party thinking of the 1920s, with the emphasis on white union in South Africa and a leaning towards English culture. Leipoldt’s articles continually call for a reigning in of “hasty” developments in Afrikaans, and a promotion of European influence and culture instead. The patrician framing of many of his discourses did not always take into account that many white South Africans simply did not have access to the kind of background Leipoldt had. Leipoldt could at times be something of an elitist, who took it for granted that a European education would be appealing and accessible to all. In this sense, the *Valley* trilogy exposes a Leipoldt ‘typical’ of the Smuts-led South African Party: English-minded, highly skeptical and possibly prejudiced against the Republics and disenfranchised because of the South African Party’s losses to the National Party. On the other hand, in the third part of *Ons Letterkunde* (1990: 39-40) Leipoldt would assert that both South African Party members and National Party members had an equal sense of nationalism but that one of the two did not necessarily spell the word with a capital ‘N’, and that newspapers operating on either side were doing much to

promote harmony between the two groups in the views of their readers. In his pursuit of raising an awareness of democracy for all South Africans, Leipoldt was not above criticising his own party, as his opinion on the reasons for the South African Party's conceding popularity to the National Party in the mid-1920s shows: "We did not apply our principles in such a way that they promoted the authentic nationalism on which every people ought to be proud... While in the saddle we did nothing..." (Leipoldt, quoted in Giliomee, 2003a: 397). In another instance, he claims that the English-speaking South African Party media was often incorrect in its interpretation of the public's national feelings (Kannemeyer, 1999: 466).

Some of these conflicting points re-emerge in *The Mask* when Santa follows up her regular 'with us or against us' curiosity about others, in this case Dr Buren:

'All these weeks I have been trying to find out where you stand in politics, and I haven't yet discovered which side you favour.'

'Politics, my dear... Well, in confidence now, although it may shock you, I am still an adherent of the old Party, although strictly between you and me, I did not record my vote at the last election. I thought it was time the other side had their innings, for honestly, my side hadn't played the game properly. Now they'll be out for a very long time, and your side will bat. I don't see how we are going to get your side out—not with our present team, at least—although your team is not altogether what you take it to be. But it is playing consistently and it is stone-walling with prodigious effect.' (Leipoldt, 2001: 575)

Dr Buren<sup>173</sup> is, like Mabuis, a spokesperson for cultural inclusivity and cosmopolitanism, but when asked about his political allegiances he gives a transparent but still conflicted response. As Leipoldt did, he "accepted criticism" and conceded that the South African Party was rightfully defeated by the National Party, but still asserts that "your team is not altogether what you take it to be", suggesting that Santa would eventually be as disappointed with the National Party as he is with the South African Party. In light of the mischievous Leipoldt being asked about his political affinities at social events and claiming allegiance to both the South African Party and the National Party (in the days before they united), Buren's

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<sup>173</sup> The Irish Dr Buren seems to me an ironic reference by Leipoldt to the support Boer nationalists had from Irish nationalists during the South African War, and Leipoldt also refers to a pro-Boer Irish contingent in the British parliament in a letter written in 1902; see Boehmer (2005), pp. 4-5 and Leipoldt, quoted in Kannemeyer (1999), p. 131.

prescience may speak, in the final analysis, to the futility of party propaganda, of party line discourse in the face of losing a valid claim to culture and tradition.

This kind of loss was being felt in the literature of the country, and while *Ons Letterkunde* shows a good deal of Leipoldt's fear of forsaking worthy literature in the name of politics, *The Mask* pinpoints an event that reflects the actual moment of this loss, namely the burning down of the library at Clanwilliam during the South African War. The town's public records were destroyed and as such it lost part of its documented 'story', which may have partly motivated Leipoldt to write the *Valley* trilogy (Gray, 1984). In *The Mask*, Buren sadly reflects on the destruction of the Village's library in a monologue that echoes the weariness of Oom Gert (again, an older speaker addresses a younger person), and seems appropriate for the stage:

‘Burned, my dear. Destroyed during the war. That was our first great calamity. It changed everything. It killed the good feeling between us, and it made people bitter. You know too little about that chapter, Santa, and perhaps it's just as well. But you do a frightful lot of harm—I don't say you, personally, but your Party—when you harp on it and try to make political capital out of that bitterness. Those of us who went through it look back upon it with unutterable regret. Those of you who weren't in it, and who now try to draw vicariously upon it, have no idea what it meant. We may seem old and stodgy to you who think we never had a national consciousness—whatever that may be—but let me assure you we felt very passionately in those days, and that we had our own ideals... Now we are in a welter of words, without sincerity and without, usually, much sense, and that to my mind is infinitely worse...’ (Leipoldt, 2001: 577)

### ***Heritage, pageantry and modernism***

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the moral universe of the *Valley* trilogy is “framed by the idea of a liberal Cape tradition” (Merrington, 2003: 38) and moments like Maria's reverie for the ‘lost’ world of characters like Andrew Quakerley “sums up the author's tendency throughout the three novels” (Merrington, 2003: 43) to refer nostalgically to the nineteenth century. The author's characters in the novel operate on the basis of comparisons between the present and the past, and Merrington, discussing the moment in *The Mask* in which Maria reminisces about the earlier days of the Valley, mentions this as a motif employed in the *Valley* trilogy:

Within the Valley trilogy is an inherent nostalgia for a perceived gracious past, which is in sharp contrast to the emerging destructive tendencies in Leipoldt's own society. The class-based contrast which the speaker makes between her husband and her childhood connections is acted out in scenes in the latter two novels where aristocratic tolerance is compared with bourgeois partnership. Leipoldt's ethical frame of reference lies squarely in the later nineteenth-century Cape Colony, with its... patrician traditions, and its cosmopolitan links. Leipoldt idealises the past through Maria Vantloo's memory, but her reconstruction of the past is certainly, too, a summation of the author's views. (2003: 43)

Merrington goes on to explore the limitations of Leipoldt's overall scheme, pointing out that it plays almost directly into questions of heritage that may be put under the umbrella of a discourse on tradition (2003: 43). This refers back to the introduction of this thesis, in which heritage and tradition are described as both inevitable and inimical to nationalism. Championing Union-era loyalist concerns of conciliation between English and Afrikaners, Leipoldt countered the invention of heritage on the part of the Afrikaners with arguments for an English heritage that was already manifest, or at the very least already in operation. In so doing, he was using a yearning for a past that was itself, ironically, a by-product of modernity in England at the time in order to challenge the incorporation, by the nationalists, of a past that supposedly contained the root of the modern Afrikaner – namely the events of the previous century, from the Great Trek to the South African War.

This is in many ways similar to Leipoldt's sustained argument that against an established language and culture as strong as England's, Afrikaner cultural development and the growth of Afrikaans would be troubled because it was based on political agitation rather than carefully planned stages of nurture: the fast-track element of modernity, of trying to 'speed' the growth of Afrikaans through all the available channels was the germ of Leipoldt's own modernist criticism in *The Mask*. The concept of modernism, if taken as a philosophy of modern art, always has included in its definitions both the break from and the tension with the past, as exemplified by modernism's responses, in England, to Romanticism as well as its responses to modernity. If Anderson links nationalism to modernity, he falls more or less in line with Hobsbawm, who writes about the invention of tradition – both writers make the case

for nationalism as a means to political and economic ends. What may be found here is the dual emergence of “invented traditions” and “imagined communities”, with the emphasis on the former in England in the early years of the twentieth century, and the emphasis on the latter in South Africa at the same time. In Leipoldt’s case, the heritage discourse may be influencing the fiction, lending it possibly unintended but still notable affinities with modernist projects in England:

...in the later nineteenth century and the early twentieth century within the English-speaking world ‘heritage’ served as a powerful set of metaphors with which to promote imperial interests, drawing on questions of imperial British ‘heritage’ and ‘destiny’, on imperial ‘trusteeship’ of colonized peoples, on attitudes to social class, land, conceptions of civic duty... which reinforced the conception of British South Africa as a patrician domain in contrast to rival Afrikaner republican thinking... The British imperial set of family metaphors used to describe commonwealth relationships, as well as their usage of the concept of ‘trusteeship’ with which to legitimate colonial ‘protectorates’ adds a political dimension to the heritage theme. Leipoldt’s trilogy follows suit... (Merrington, 2003: 43-44)

At the beginning of *The Mask*, the narrator quickly informs readers that the country is in the grip of “hard times” (Leipoldt, 2001: 518), and the Village is now more or less in the pockets of Elias Vantloo. The narrator describes him disdainfully as typical of someone who would view himself as a “self-made man” (Leipoldt, 2001: 518), a self-satisfied slave to power who uses gestures of humility to endear him to others and to increase his stature. While in the past he may not have prospered in the Village due to a lack of recognisable kin, the situation has changed to the point where his influence buys him the status that proclaims him as one of the District’s own. He is described as being opportunistic, having secretly profited from the South African War at the expense of the Afrikaner people he claims to be part of, and having switched, when it was fashionable to do so, his allegiances from the South African Party to the National Party (Leipoldt, 2001: 519).

Immediately, in the opening passages of *The Mask*, Leipoldt posits Elias Vantloo as living suspended between the older world, destroyed in *Stormwrack*, and a newer world. Vantloo’s home also boasts a scenic garden and the narrator notes that, while modernised, the Vantloo house itself merges the old with the new. Restorations applied to the early-nineteenth century,



Cape Dutch design of the home appeared merely to “enhance the dignified solidity of the old design” (Leipoldt, 2001: 517). This then also alludes to the surface of Elias Vantloo’s character. He is a mayoral figure, ostensibly enamoured of the past and an authority who, because of his wealth, can count on the respect and reverence of the townsfolk.

There is a tendency towards pageantry in Elias Vantloo. As noted above, he merely pretended to be one with the Nationalists once it was safely fashionable to do so. His loyalty to the nationalists is questionable. His own personal history of coming into a fortune through loaning his transport services to the English during the South African War suggests that he has little interest in any great national cause other than seeing the benefits of it for himself. He is obviously a self-interested and self-indulgent character who seldom cares for others, and throughout the novel he wears many ‘masks’. He wears the mask of the loving and devoted husband and father when actually he steals money from his family; he wears the mask of the teetotaler when actually he drinks on the sly; he wears the mask of the patriotic Afrikaner when actually he manipulates this identity to profit from those, blinded by Afrikaner patriotism, who see in him as a leader figure, and he wears the mask of the humble community man when secretly he was the father of an illegitimate child with the household servant. Quite unlike Nolte in *Gallows Gecko*, Elias Vantloo is a chameleon able to adapt to and benefit from any circumstances. Whereas Nolte was shown to be wracked by guilt over the secret he kept, Vantloo merely takes on more dark secrets and shows little or no remorse for them. If Nolte, a character that precedes Vantloo by two generations, is drawn to ideas of tradition and being an honest squire in an idyllic setting (the Valley itself), Vantloo is a modern shape-shifter who merely pretends to uphold tradition insofar as it benefits him to do so. He has a broken identity – the characters of *Gallows Gecko* would have singled him out for having no armiger, no recognisable dynasty or heritage – and, showing no redemptive qualities, he is an almost wholly flat character. He is a ‘performer’, and in the context of the heritage discourses surrounding the Union of South Africa in 1910 and the Great Trek centenary of 1938, he comes across as someone more involved with pageantry, with mimicry, than with real life.

On both the English and Afrikaner sides of white South African cultural development, pageantry was crucial in reinforcing group identity and heritage. With the founding of the Union of South Africa in 1910 and with the South African Party unchallenged as the dominant political party in the country, pageants were held to emphasize the English side of

union – the promotion of English ideals and traditions (Merrington, 2010). Former South African Party leader General Louis Botha (he would be succeeded by Jan Smuts), who had earned a reputation as one of the great leaders of the Boers in the South African War, was heavily criticised by Afrikaners who saw him as too willing to accept Englishness (Giliomee, 2003a: 358 and 370), particularly the aspiration to conciliation between Afrikaners and English. As mentioned in the previous chapter, pageants emphasizing the English character of the Union of South Africa were clearly part of a larger project that had its roots in Victorianism, according to Merrington:

Much of the ‘heritage discourse’ in the English-speaking world between roughly 1880 and 1920 was concerned with preserving vernacular traditions, architecture and folk lore, as a means of reinforcing English national identity. Much of this may be traced back to John Ruskin, and his lobbying for conservation societies, which he blended fluently with calls for renewal of English virtue. (2003: 44)

Merrington goes on to quote a passage from *The Mask* as an example of “a similar movement which had risen in the Cape in the late 1890s, which sought to recreate English vernacular revival concerns, linked to the heritage and destiny of the British, within the new state of the Union of South Africa” (2003: 44):

Once upon a time the Village had been a gem, its thatched houses with their white-washed walls and gables, contrasting boldly but at the same time harmoniously with the greenery of oak, poplar and orange trees. The war had changed all that. Most of the houses had been burned down, and many of the thatch roofs had been replaced by ugly corrugated-iron painted red, which the scorching sun had blistered and robbed of any beauty they might have possessed. The Village was no longer what it had been in the old days... A few of the residents still lavished care and attention upon their gardens, but none could show the magnificent results which old Andrew Quakerley... had attained in his wonderful garden, years ago. The Village still remembered that garden, as one remembers things of which legend speaks, things not quite positively proved but so strongly stressed by tradition that belief in them was significant of liberal toleration. (Leipoldt, 2001: 608)

Evident in this quote is the strongly English concern for a “lost, organic past” (Merrington, 2003: 45). The lament in the above quote from *The Mask* possibly even suggests that in the modern world, there cannot be integration with nature: note that “once upon a time the Village had been a gem”, when the white-washed walls and gables of its houses contrasted boldly but harmoniously with nature. In a post-war world, even the sun beats down mercilessly, robbing roofs of any beauty they *might* have possessed. To Leipoldt, English ideas of heritage may have strongly influenced his descriptions of the more idyllic Valley and its homes in *Gallows Gecko*, which is safely ensconced in the romantic world of the past. This could also apply to the splendid garden of *Stormwrack*, tended to and nurtured by an English-speaking character with family ties to England. The Valley’s homes were in better condition and were seen to blend with nature. Contrast this with Vantloo’s own hand in the design of his house, described at the beginning of the novel:

The most imposing house in the Village was that of Elias Vantloo...  
 Dating back to the early half of the past century, it had been added to  
 and restored so that only its front was part of the original building, but  
 the alterations had been done with such simplicity that the  
 restoration had not made the modernized building a contemptible thing  
 but rather tended to enhance the dignified solidity of the old design. That  
 was as it should have been, for Elias Vantloo was, if not the most  
 important inhabitant of the Village, at least one of the three who might  
 be looked upon as aspiring to that dignity. (Leipoldt, 2001: 517)

Of note here is that, while there is a good amount of description (excluded from the above quote) to indicate that the Vantloo home had admirable natural elements surrounding it, such as its well-kept garden and a “*stoep* made gorgeous... by the wealth of blue wisteria whose tresses daily flung masses of dead petals upon the flat-slate stones, by venerable oak trees planted by the early settlers and still vigorous and splendidly green in their old age” (Leipoldt, 2001: 517), these descriptions do not suggest an integration of the house with the natural scenery around it. The oak trees are rooted in the past, planted by the settlers of a century earlier, the kind of people paid tribute to in *Gallows Gecko*, and the kind of people men like Vantloo cannot measure up to, in Leipoldt’s estimation. The idea of integration or assimilation was crucial to *Gallows Gecko*: Nolte’s home and farm were integrated with the natural scenery of the Valley around it – he was at one with the Valley. In the case of Elias Vantloo, his house is *imposing* and he means to stand out from the rest of the Village by

virtue of being recognised as being among the most important inhabitants of the Village. He may affect a performance of being a humble servant to the Village community, but in fact he feeds off the community, almost as if, should there be any suggestion of an integration of the Village with what was left of the Valley, the integration would be exploited and devoured by Elias, as “he held bonds on most of the farms in the district” (Leipoldt, 2001: 517). Even the restorations to his home, done to enhance the old design, are merely restorations, revisiting the past for the purpose of pageantry, of politics, and this still extends to the interior of the house where his wife’s preference for “alien art” contradicts his “patriotism that forbade him to patronize alien art” (Leipoldt, 2001: 521) in the form of her choice of a mountain scene by an English painter as opposed to his choice of a landscape by a local painter.

The Afrikaner contribution to performances of heritage is memorable, perhaps even outrageous. While the final writing of *The Mask* in 1932 predates the Great Trek centenary of 1938 by six years, the ambition Afrikaner Nationalists had towards pageantry, of celebrating a particular version of history, had already been suggested by the ardent ways in which Afrikaner group identity had been proposed during the 1920s, with its strong emphasis on the history of the Great Trek and the Biblical parallels. As mentioned earlier, at one point in *The Mask*, Santa insists on flying the newly instated South African flag outside the Vantloo home, ostensibly in keeping with her father’s shows of patriotism, and although Elias is dismissive of this idea, in the novel this is due to the fact that he is not a true Nationalist; he merely pretends to be one. Santa, more enthusiastic but also more confused, looks ahead to the kind of Afrikaner who would be enthralled by the “Festival of the Ox-wagon trek” that formed part of the 1938 Great Trek centenary celebration, during which ox wagons, symbolic of the Trekkers (and therefore of Afrikaner heritage), were journeyed and displayed throughout South Africa, with Pretoria and Cape Town as its polar points (Witz, 2003: 220). The Festival of the Ox-wagon trek was easily the most popular element of the celebration which occurred exactly ten years before the official implementation of apartheid by the National Party in 1948, and fourteen years before an even larger festival celebrating white South African nationhood: the tercentennial celebrations in 1952 of Jan van Riebeeck’s landing in the Cape in 1652.

In his book documenting the massive Van Riebeeck Festival in 1952, *Apartheid’s Festival* (2003), historian Leslie Witz briefly examines the Great Trek centenary as the successful

model for the 1952 event, which included the journeying and displaying of mail coaches along routes first explored by Van Riebeeck:

The journey of the mail coaches in 1952 was consciously planned as an attempt to re-create what was claimed to be the 'tradition of large and countrywide Afrikaner volk festivals'. The model that immediately came to the fore was the one used in the 1938 Voortrekker centenary festival where the movement of ox-wagons through towns and cities from Cape Town to Pretoria had provided the direction for and means to establish a history whose prime purpose was the mobilization of a white Afrikaner volk. A key aspect of this movement was to create local and national identities in which individuals embarked on their own travels, associating the space of the trek with personal journeys of identification with people and events in an Afrikaner past... From Cape Town, where the trek began, northward through Stellenbosch, Graaff-Reinet, Bloemfontein, in an 'endless tableau', 'Afrikaner history was distributed to the Afrikaner.' Through commemorations held en route, local events and individuals were placed into an Afrikaner national past. This was a past that told the story of a journey away from British imperial control and toward the conquest of the southern African interior... The response to the trek of 1938 was overwhelmingly positive, especially among recently urbanized Afrikaans speakers. Many of these were either employed or seeking employment in industries where wages were low, and unsanitary working conditions often the norm.... Afrikaner nationalist organizations presented themselves as champions of the workers' struggles for better conditions and job security against what was represented as 'foreign' or 'English' capitalists, who often controlled these industries. These capitalists were depicted as being concerned merely with profit, whereas the nationalists maintained that their interests lay with protecting the workers through networks of cultural filiation. Similarly, the Afrikaans-speaking petit-bourgeoisie of lawyers, teachers, and civil servants were having difficulty securing positions in an administrative apparatus seen to be under English control. An anti-imperial narrative of colonial conquest that was being presented, through the 1938 trek, was therefore able to provide the basis for a 'unique moment of cross-class mobilization.' (2003: 220-21)

A citadel of Afrikaner modernity may be found here, in what Witz describes as 'cross-class mobilization', a project that had its emergence in the 1920s with the Nationalist drive to promoting poor whites above non-whites, regardless of skill level, in mostly the mining sector, where English control and its employment of non-white workers had always been a

grievance to the Afrikaners (Giliomee, 2003a: 318, 329). That this modern Afrikaner identity itself owed something to these pageants celebrating the past is foreseen by Leipoldt in *The Mask*, when through Mabuis, Buren and Gertrude, he complains that the past is being re-written for political purposes – in particular, the story of the South African War, which was being re-imagined through substandard literature as being a tale exclusively concerned with championing an heroic Afrikaner distinctiveness (Leipoldt, 2001: 576).

### ***Social inequalities***

While the end of the South African War ushered in the period up to the unification of the republics and the colonies in the country (Merrington, 2003:41), the outbreak of World War I also saw events that would in time contribute to undermining this concept of unity. When the rebellion occurred in German South West Africa, scores of Afrikaner soldiers refused to take up arms alongside the English they were supposed to support (Giliomee, 2003a: 382-383), and this split between Boer soldiers who were unwilling to fight and those who fought with the English would develop into nationwide polarisation between the white groups in South Africa throughout the 1910s and 1920s.

At the same time that the World War I rebellion had drawn attention to these apparent discontinuities, farming was experiencing numerous challenges in South Africa. With changing times, more of an emphasis was placed on mineral mining on the Witwatersrand and in Kimberley than on farming, and the early years of the twentieth century saw greater and greater migrations to urban centres taking place, leaving a shortage of skilled farmers (Giliomee, 2003a: 321, 328, 330). Until 1910, the year of unification, the country's larger "non-white" population had still been quite prominently involved in the system of sharecropping, which amounted to black and white farmers working together, even if the white farmers were still adamant about claiming their racial superiority (Giliomee, 2003a: 297). Sharecropping, as well as the growing numbers of unskilled white farmers, and the willingness of many non-whites to provide cheap farm labour on farms held by English owners saw a sense of panic overwhelm much of the country's Afrikaner population, largely still disillusioned with the outcome of the South African War and the defeat of the Boer forces in 1902 (Giliomee, 2003a: 302). Mining developments, the rapid growth of cities and technological advancement in the arrival of the motor car and new agricultural machinery were all signs of increased modernisation in the twentieth century (Merrington, 2003: 41).

In South Africa, land inheritance from father to son regularly saw farmland distributed between many siblings, resulting in each sibling receiving a parcel of land too small to earn a living on (Giliomee, 2003a: 321). In other instances, inherited land suffered from overgrazing and exhaustion due to poor farming methods and challenges posed by modern agricultural implements (2003a: 321). This, coupled with the threats posed to Afrikaner prosperity posed by land occupancy by the much larger “non-white” population, found the Afrikaner desperate to consolidate a twentieth century South Africa under white rule (Giliomee, 2003a: 279, 300, 305, 306). In the quest to secure “a white man’s country”, Afrikaner leaders thought up, during the immediate years before and after the establishment of the Union, ways of dividing South African land between whites and the far greater number of “non-whites” (Giliomee, 2003a: 308, 310, 311), leading to the Native Land Act of 1913, which demarcated less than one-tenth of the land as “reserves” for “non-whites” and motivating the declaration by Sol Plaatje<sup>174</sup>, then secretary for the South African Native Council (later to become the African National Congress) that he awoke one morning to find himself a pariah in the land of his birth (Pampallis, 1992: 23).

Santa and Mabuis debate the topic of land exhaustion. He is visiting the District from his adopted home of Argentina (where he is established as a result of profiting from farming lucern). He keenly advocates the superiority of agriculture in Argentina to that of South Africa. He maintains, in a conflict Coetzee (1988) explores, that the natural scenery in South Africa retains its splendour: the farm perishes but the Valley still pleases aesthetically. The debate he and Santa have instantly becomes a debate on modern technology versus older farming methods. The debate runs deeper still to political culpability: Mabuis blames the land exhaustion on farming methods promoted by Afrikaner nationalists. Santa, in turn, blames the land exhaustion on the advanced farming technologies, which come with English-language instruction only, and are therefore designed specifically to suit English-speaking farmers and to put Afrikaner farmers at a disadvantage (Leipoldt, 2001: 552).

By extension, their debate also speaks to land divisions. The ‘coloured’ location where Santa’s illegitimate half-sister is dying of consumption becomes an antiphon for topics on segregationist policies as well as the biological theme of degeneration. The location is a glaring example of substandard land division, an unjust outcome of the Native Land Act of

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<sup>174</sup> Plaatje is another writer suited to a study of South African modernism; see Boehmer (2005), p. 125-169



1913 which caused the displacement of largely African peoples to unsuitable areas of land to claim as their own, and the location in *The Mask* shows unsuitable and unmanageable areas more suited to waste that were being inhabited by vast and overcrowded populations and where dysentery and disease soon followed.

Looking even deeper into the location, Santa will later be forced to concede her zealous and blind belief in her father and his brand of nationalism as being misguided when she discovers that the location had all the time harboured the secret of Sophia's link to her. This discovery then also displays Leipoldt's overall trajectory of modernity, organic destruction and third-generation degeneration. The latter is a theme already hinted at earlier in the novel when the narrator informs the reader that throughout the Village there had always been speculation about Maria's family's history of inter-breeding, and a theme again hinted at by low-key suggestions of an incestuous bond between Maria and her brother, Jeremiah.

Breaking another trend of the previous two novels, *The Mask* also gives a "non-white" character a prominent role, highlighting the limitations of merely concentrating on "whiteness", which is the case in *Gallows Gecko* and *Stormwrack*. In those novels, "non-white" characters only make cameo appearances and are derogatorily called "half-castes" and "Natives". "Non-white" people are largely an abstracted presence in long conversations about racial policies between characters in those novels. In *The Mask*, in an Afrikaner nationalist household, there is the servant Aya Minah. Her presence in the novel augments both the personal dynamics between certain characters embroiled in a mystery and also draws attention to racism in a manner more urgent than is the case in the previous two novels.

However, the attention to racism in *The Mask* reveals a general flawed tendency of Leipoldt's that surfaces in his general writing, with *Bushveld Doctor* being an exception. The flaw lies in Leipoldt's ability to identify and problematize racial inequality in its social, cultural and economic forms, but in not in outlining what his vision of an equal South Africa entails. He calls for a race-free utopia often enough in the *Valley* trilogy and provides some provocative criticisms in *The Mask*, but does not try to imagine a coherent inclusive modern nation. The 'poor white' issue and the unfairness of the employment advantages for 'poor whites' over black workers in the mining and railway industries is a topic Leipoldt brings up and shows some characters discussing in *The Mask*. However, much as this amounts to a critique of the invention of tradition that excludes "non-whites", it also points to Leipoldt's most consistent

flaw regarding this topic: he is happy to intervene and disturb other people's ideas about race and nation but does not elaborate on what he considers the alternatives to be and how they could be effected. Consider the following conversation from the *The Mask* (between Santa, her aunt Gertrude and Gertrude's husband, Jeremiah) that summarises Leipoldt's general dealing with race and social inequalities:

'The Rekkers were always obstinate folk, Niece,' commented Jerry drily.

'Nor need I be ashamed of it, Husband,' the old lady retorted with spirit. 'Nor frightened to think that the Black folk will crush us unless we keep them down. It is just fear, my dear, that makes people incline to the Northern view and it is just laziness which makes us all talk so much and do so little... I don't see much difference between uneducated Black folk and uneducated Whites except that the latter are less to my liking than the former.'

In the above quote, Gertrude seems to make reference to the National Party's 'Black Peril' line that helped the party win the South African general elections in 1929 based on a stated priority of overcoming the 'threat' posed by black South Africans outnumbering white South Africans. Clearly, Gertrude's voice is similar to Reverend Von Bergmann's in *Gallows Gecko*: both are spirited in making their argument for racial equality, yet both are *merely* spirited. Von Bergmann, as a missionary, tried to be an agent of change in the nineteenth century, before the widespread inequalities of twentieth century South Africa, but Gertrude does little but talk. There are no agents of change as fiery as some of the dialogues in *Gallows Gecko* and *The Mask* might suggest.

While Leipoldt's general argument for racial equality holds true to *The Mask* and much of his other writing, the counter to the nationalist project he offers does not engage as well as it could have with pressing matters of social inequalities in the 1920s and 1930s. He offers his opinions on South African modernity but his failing to say more, or perhaps his unwillingness, factors as a feature of his modernist response to the modernity he was unhappy with. To that extent, the autobiographical narrative as well as the fictional narrative I have discussed in this chapter both seem to stop at the same abrupt point.

The politics of the time indicate the limit of white subjectivity, meaning that, in Leipoldt's context, the politics surrounding him were at least partially responsible for the limitations of imagining possible inclusive communities. Leipoldt's own flaw, in this regard, is his locating his anti-nationalist critique in a valourisation of the elite culture of Europe. For all his earnest arguments for racial equality, he cannot conceive of Black subjectivity and he does not research Black South African culture to any serious degree. *The Mask* is an example of how Leipoldt may have sustained a larger focus on "non-white" characters in his fiction. The lack of such characters, and of subjectivity different to what is generally found in Leipoldt's fiction, marks the most notable drawback of the *Valley* trilogy, yet the drawback must be included as part of the curious project Leipoldt's work in this period represents.

## CONCLUSION: CONTESTED NATIONALISM, INTERROGATED MODERNITY

Leipoldt's fiction and his journalism offer a unique and original perspective on crucial events in South African history. In this thesis I have tried to bring together various points of a complex argument. Firstly, I have tried to explain the ways in which the writing of C. Louis Leipoldt provides an interesting literary documentation of the development of South African modernity. Leipoldt's *Valley* trilogy and his journalism, I argued, are the most representative of his views on modernity and nationalism. The readings of Leipoldt's journalism, in this thesis, are to supplement the main focus, namely the study of the trilogy and the pursuit of evidence that suggests Leipoldt can be read as a South African modernist.

I began this thesis by suggesting that Leipoldt deserves to be reconsidered as more than merely a misunderstood yet canonised local writer. Chapter one had as its aim the establishment of two prevalent discussions: firstly, the discussion of Leipoldt as a South African modernist and, secondly, a discussion of historical contexts that could frame such an argument, citing the work of Chakrabarty, Mitchell and Merrington. While offering a brief survey of the typical literature on Leipoldt that was produced in the twentieth century, both in his lifetime and after his death, I also drew attention to the writers who were intrigued with Leipoldt and how his work viewed the social, political and historical issues of his time. The Leipoldt discovered in the *Valley* trilogy is indeed a 'different' Leipoldt to the one largely remembered in Afrikaans literature as the writer of poems that more often than not rhapsodised about the South African landscape.

After the original publication of *Stormwrack* in 1980, Gray and Kannemeyer drew regular attention to Leipoldt's anti-nationalism, and more recently so have others like Hein Viljoen, Peter Merrington and Sandra Swart. Before Gray and Kannemeyer, Kromhout, Markus Viljoen and Burgers had also mentioned Leipoldt's opposition to Afrikaner nationalism and his engagement with English culture as a former Cape Colonial. By the time the *Valley* trilogy was published in 2001, this 'other' Leipoldt was no longer a new topic but it remains an intriguing one. In this thesis, that sense of intrigue manifests in some of the visionary quotes I extract from Leipoldt's journalism and from the trilogy. I use the term 'visionary' to draw attention to Leipoldt's regular anticipations of twentieth century South Africa in his writing, with *The Mask* a strong case in point for the acrid note it ends on. Leipoldt's

journalism, read alongside the fiction of the trilogy, offers a new perspective on older discussions about his work and his views. In chapter one, I hoped to emphasise my interest in what I believed to be Leipoldt's twin impulses to not only fictionalise his anti-nationalist stance and views on English culture in the Cape but also to give his account of South African modernity in the trilogy. The terms modernity and modernism are key to my argument. My initial engagement in chapter two was an attempt to define the terms as well as the sometimes complex interaction between modernity and modernism, and how different the two terms are to one another even as they intersect. This was necessary in order to show what I call (appropriating the term from the manner it is used in Chakrabarty, Mitchell and Hassan) 'differential modernisms' that are a strong focus area in the study of 'geomodernities' (appropriating the term from the way it is reflected in the work of Brooker and Thacker, as well as Friedman). In the South African example, the past was a touchstone for Afrikaner modernity, with events of the nineteenth century celebrated and even re-enacted in the twentieth century, a reinvention of tradition which is central to the definition of the modern South African nation. I described the necessity of seeing modernity not exclusively as an invention of the West and drew on Friedman's pronouncement that *every modernity has its own distinct modernism* to motivate a proposal for a specifically South African modernism. Esty's recent work in reconsidering the nineteenth and early twentieth century colonial bildungsroman as being closer to twentieth century modernism is indicative of new ways in which colonial literatures can be brought into discussions of modernism.

In the third chapter I focused on the idea of Leipoldt as a reluctant modernist. I mean by this that he is actively engaged with and involved in shaping the project of South African modernity (through his journalism) while at the same time remaining attached to a nostalgic vision of the nineteenth century as the site of valuable traditions (which are now being lost). I describe Leipoldt as reluctant because of his preference for the proto-modernists of the nineteenth century and how he turns to them when he offers correctives to the state of modern Afrikaans literature. However, the Afrikaans literature Leipoldt often wrote about also looked to the past of the nineteenth century but in doing so only considered an insular Afrikaner history. The worldly Leipoldt kept referring to the Western nineteenth century concept of progress and argued that divisive Afrikaner politics were anti-progressive and pre-modern. The *Valley* trilogy's central characters consider the pre-modern, unenlightened scope of Afrikaner thinking while being aware that modern industrial capitalism has aided the Afrikaner nationalist cause.

Leipoldt's reluctance emerges in his literary struggle to articulate a modernism that was neither the propaganda literature of Afrikaner nationalism nor the experimental modernism of writers such as Joyce, of whom he was extremely dismissive. His modernism was closer to Henry James and Joseph Conrad in that it remained focussed on the break from tradition and nineteenth century values. The *Valley* trilogy finds Leipoldt meticulously sketching that break, or shift, through writing that resembled proto-modernism—that is, writing that expressed a break from tradition without venturing into the later territory of modernism with its characteristic features and stylistic expressions associated with Joyce.

In chapter four I looked at *Gallows Gecko*, the first novel of the *Valley* trilogy. Here, I argued that the novel showed a tension between historical forces in the conceptualisation of its utopic setting. The historical forces I identified were the twin roles played by slaves and missionaries in the nineteenth century Cape. I argued that the slave trade that was abolished by the 1830s in the Cape Colony featured as a shaping factor in the establishment of lavish farmsteads found in the novel and the emancipation of slaves played a part in the trajectory of South African modernity, directly influencing the events of the Great Trek. As missionaries featured as important characters in the novel with often outspoken views of racial equality, I paid attention to the comparisons and contrasts between their historical impact on South African modernity (indeed, they appear as unlikely agents of modernity) and the way they are represented in the novel.

In chapter five I discussed the second novel, *Stormwrack*, which shows how the engagement with modernity in South Africa fictionalised in *Gallows Gecko* begins to change during the last years of the nineteenth century. The cultural component of modernity emerged as a key interest in this chapter, which explored the novel's depiction of the clash between English and Afrikaner cultures in South Africa more than it actually focussed on descriptions of warfare itself. The cultural defensiveness, represented by differing attitudes to loyalty and patriotism by the warring factions in the novel, is symbolic of a larger break that occurs in the story of South Africa at the beginning of the twentieth century. This break, which sees the end of nineteenth century Cape Colonial tradition and the emergence of twentieth century Afrikaner nationalism as a more powerful force, I examined as the binding motif of *Stormwrack* as a modernist novel, showing similarities to forms of 'nostalgic' modernism in England produced by Conrad and Ford, Sackville-West and Woolf. The 'nostalgia' referred

to here is found in literature that displays a propensity to focus on the modern while at the same time both distancing itself from the past, from tradition, but also yearning for it.

In chapter six I discussed the third novel, *The Mask*, and its depiction of an ideological battle between liberals and nationalists that is also literally played out in the melodramatic plot involving a scandalous family trying hard to keep damaging secrets hidden. The novel is the most obvious one in the trilogy making an argument against Afrikaner nationalism and I combined a close reading of the novel with analyses of Leipoldt's journalism of the period (the late 1920s and early 1930s). In this chapter I drew substantially from the work of Benedict Anderson, and found his concept of 'imagined communities' particularly useful for considering the work of nationalism taking place in South Africa. Leipoldt's newspaper columns indicate that he was, to some extent, aware of the concept of nationalism being somewhat dependent on forging a community through print media. As I argued in this chapter, literary figures being co-opted to write for Afrikaner publications suited the objectives of those wishing to nurture the Afrikaans language as a political tool to strengthen nationalism. Respected literary figures like Leipoldt and C.J. Langenhoven could ostensibly establish readerships for their political party's mandates and visions. Writing in Afrikaans, Leipoldt regularly argued against the way the language was being used for political purposes. Leipoldt, I argue, was trying to disrupt the imagined communities of the Afrikaner nationalist project.

The *Valley* trilogy includes elements of Leipoldt's literary engagements with Europe and *Stormwrack*, in particular, contains numerous instances of its colonial characters mulling over their suddenly precarious position as (mostly) native-born colonial subjects at a time when remaining both loyal or neutral was as hazardous as rebelling. Moreover, the implied bildungsroman structure of the trilogy, combined with a certain realist approach, collapses into a darker, symbolist depiction of inner monologue and organic destruction (occurring simultaneously) at the climax of *Stormwrack*. From there, the final part of the trilogy, *The Mask*, follows as a melodramatic yet coldly indifferent narrative on the modern social condition of 1920s South Africa that in its tone and feeling, perhaps belatedly, writes back to the sense of what Esty identifies as the breaking of progressive temporality first encountered in *The Story of an African Farm* and now includes, more openly, the topic of nationalism and its intersection with modernism. It is here where I return, briefly, to Esty's argument for the recognition of modernism in colonial or former colonial literature.



*The Mask*, representing a post-war microcosm of South Africa, is the first to portray a young protagonist, and a female one at that. Up to this point, the trilogy's concern with degeneration saw a peculiar application of some of the ingredients of the colonial bildungsroman: in *Gallows Gecko*, Nolte's narrative is surely fitting as bildungsroman material, but he is not young and his story is never resolved; it never reaches an ending point even if it does reach a kind of incidental maturity for him. In *Stormwrack*, the protagonist is already in the twilight of his life, not progressing toward anything and only moved out of his passivity when he sees both the old and the young of his community suffering under martial law and Boer commando raids. The old, the flag-bearers of tradition, are disrespected and ill-treated by English military authority while the young are seduced into rebellion, for which they will die. Over these two novels, then, youth is not given a central role and therefore, youth becomes more symbolic of degeneration than progress. Afforded a background role, the minor young characters of *Gallows Gecko* and *Stormwrack* are hardly given the room to explore or articulate their *bildungs* dilemma, yet their disillusionment is a major moral theme. In short, they are never seen to age, much like the other examples Esty mentions in Schreiner, Kipling and Conrad, and one of them dies.

In *The Mask*, Santa is a self-assured young character arriving back to the Valley after medical training in London, and she brings with her modern ideas of progress and independence. Even aesthetically, her clothing choices are meant to signify her opposition to gender and social conventions and her brashness is an alien quality. Her self-belief operates in tandem with her admiration of her father but as she gradually discovers his damaging secrets her assuredness is chipped away and she feels the incomprehensibility of her world. After resisting change and societal expectation—in this case, getting married—she eventually does decide to marry but only after she has almost been rendered numb by the level of her parents' betrayal. She seems directionless, or “frozen”, as Esty would have it, by the end of the novel, suspended between an unhappy ending to her family situation and a more uncertain future. Amidst all the talk of a “new” Afrikaner nation she had so passionately championed, it is the vengeance of the old, the nineteenth century which inflicts a blow to her beliefs in nationhood and family in the literary form of Victorian disillusionment and betrayal. The denouement of *The Mask* is suitably theatrical and harks back to Victorian drama and suspense, and it does not escape us that those who betray her are the ones who were young in the late nineteenth century, the former youths who could have been in any colonial bildungsroman of that

period. Once proud of the modern era she finds herself in, Santa ends the novel not knowing how to negotiate the modernity that was shaping and was being shaped by nationalism.

This thesis focussed on one writer's literary engagement with modernity and traced one particular narrative of modernism. It is 'the making of a South African Modernism' rather than 'the' South African modernism exactly because it is still largely located in the white South African artistic response to modernity, eschewing the older black modernity and its print media that predates the white South African model by some years. It is an account of 'a' modernism exactly because the complex interactions and movements between the different populations of South Africa is not a notable enough feature in the subject material. The limited focus on a white-only socio-cultural modernity is both the point of the subject material and its greatest drawback. It succeeds in emphasising the lengths to which white South Africa excluded mostly black South Africans from its folkloric vision of the country, and to that extent the subject material offers a criticism of white modernity. However, in failing to engage with black South African modernity and how it was impacted upon by the white modernity, the subject material misses an opportunity to have analysed divergent modernities occurring in the same country, with the country itself partly divergent from a Eurocentric idea of modernity. The relationship between the subject material of South African modernity (in this thesis) and its own relationship to Europe through the history of colonialism does not signify that the model of modernity this thesis explores is wholly Eurocentric. It was influenced by Europe, undoubtedly, but settled into its own narrative. This narrative is a vital component to the story of South Africa in 2012, a part of its growth narrative. This narrative also contributes to more recent scholarly attempts (the work of Simon Gikandi and Dipesh Chakrabarty to name two examples) of breaking down a long-held notion that only one model of modernity could be applied to a global history, that the term 'modernity' is not only Euro-centric but applies to a general description of the advent of a universal understanding of capitalism and democracy.

The relation between modernity and nationalism in Leipoldt's work remains worthy of study, both for its provocations and shortcomings. While often looking to the past of the nineteenth century in his writing, Leipoldt aimed most of his criticism at the social thinking of his contemporaries and made negative yet wise presumptions about the future of social interaction and cultural development in South Africa. He did not consider separatist and racist ideologies to be sustainable and estimated that these were a product of a particular kind of

modernity in South Africa. He mentions the mass exclusion of “non-white” South Africans as his animus against the white sections he studies but, very obviously, does not offer a direct or sustained engagement with “non-white” South African culture apart from isolated instances.

I have argued that nationalism is an articulation of modernity in South Africa, a conscious or deliberate shaping of collective identity and a break away from older traditions while trying to invent new ones. I have paid particular attention to Leipoldt’s tracing of South Africa’s transition from the nineteenth century, in which there was a political divide between English colonialism and Afrikaner Republicanism, to a twentieth century South Africa supposedly unified but more politically segregated than at any other point in its history. The period between 1910 and 1930 I have tried to present as the period in which the dividedness of white South African political and cultural visions in essence defined and determined the story of South Africa in the twentieth century, a story pointing to what would be known as apartheid. A project on a writer like Sol Plaatje would shed light on the experience of an intellectual operating on the oppressed side of the divide during the same period and such a project is urgently encouraged now, with the centenary of the African National Congress as a recent event. However, I justify my focus on Leipoldt as an internal saboteur because until recently, his position was overlooked and misunderstood. In addition to the relative neglect of studies about South African modernity (in any field outside of the historical and, recently, the sociological) and, more importantly (from a humanities perspective), South African modernism, there is the still unresolved issue around Leipoldt’s status as an important Afrikaner poet. If his legacy as an Afrikaner poet is associated with a perception of his being no different from a nationalist poet like C.J. Langenhoven, then this is to miss the point of exactly what his critique of what white South African modernity was. Leipoldt’s case against this modernity rests on his reaction to its determinism and arrogance. His warnings as to the sustainability of a segregated South Africa eventually turned out to be straightforward and prophetic. The reading of the *Valley* trilogy offered here supports the research of Burgers, Kromhout, Kannemeyer and Gray, all of whom identified Leipoldt’s anti-nationalism.

Leipoldt as an internal saboteur of the Afrikaner nationalist project was also a proposition I wished to tease out in this thesis. While he was not nationalist, he was certainly read and popularly believed to be one at a time when the ability to communicate in Afrikaans, as a white South African, was so easily a way to be co-opted to the ideologies of Afrikaner nationalism in the early twentieth century. His literary representation and response to

modernity necessarily had also to respond to Afrikaner nationalism as well as the legacy of English colonialism. It is worth noting that merely one year after the Union of South Africa was formed, Afrikaners were already pushing in a different direction with the establishment of the Second Afrikaans Language Movement in 1911. Because Leipoldt's poetry debut arrived the same year, he was immediately entangled with the movement and the reluctant modernist I have sketched him as most likely came to life at this point, one who found more answers to modern dilemmas in the nineteenth century than he did in the twentieth.

However, unlike the nationalists he opposed, Leipoldt saw the past as a lesson to learn from on the way forward, not a site to return to. As much as one may find a yearning for the past in Leipoldt's work, and as much as one could infer this from the alternative reading of history offered by *Gallows Gecko*, in particular, he found no "auratic"<sup>175</sup> point to return to and recreate. His own peculiar, nineteenth century vision of what constituted the "modern" may have been outmoded, but it was never regressive—it merely used an older vocabulary, the terms of the nineteenth century

Leipoldt shifted about constantly in a modernity that was uncomfortable, looking for a foothold but aware also that all footholds were tenuous, constantly looking for another foothold, and another after that. Never settled with one identity, Leipoldt the shapeshifter moved constantly like the modernity around him, but the movement was never consistent in a particular direction. Rather, the different directions Leipoldt argued in, his emphasis on being contradictory and his desire for dialogue, always, suggest the reluctant modernist able to move in hard-to-follow trajectories both because of and, ironically, suited to the indecision of the modernity itself. Leipoldt's emphasis on open dialogue and threads of discourse ties his life-story to his writing in a way that suggests a conversation between the two, not dissimilar to the conversations his fiction are made of and the conversations he was trying to stimulate however he could between people.

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<sup>175</sup> This term associated with Walter Benjamin, who wrote about the past as having an aura that art in the age of mechanical reproduction attempted to recreate.

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